

Makers of Indian Literature

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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.
From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.
Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

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Sahitya Akademi

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Preface

Biswanath Kar, widely known in Odisha as Bagmi Biswanath Kar is one of the pioneers of modern Odia literature. He was a very learned man with progressive attitudes, revolutionary fervour and great zeal for social reform. He was a lover of Odia language and literature. Through his writings, and by editing a famous journal in which he published the works of eminent writers both old and young, he tried to enrich Odia literature. In spite of several problems in his life including terrible financial hardship he could become an eminent writer and efficient editor with sheer perseverance and strength of will. He was excommunicated from his Brahmin society for not obeying the prevailing rules of social conduct. Two of his much loved younger brothers died prematurely. He bore with all loss and suffering but did not leave his reformatory zeal and love for Odia language and literature. Biswanath was a great orator who could keep the audience spell bound by his speeches. He wrote and encouraged others to write for the enrichment of Odia literature. Writing about his long eventful life and the body of his literature within the limited space of this monograph would be a daunting and difficult task.

In this study an attempt has been made to capture the variety and largeness of Biswanath's life, vision and works. The details of his personal life that had some specific bearing upon his literary career have been highlighted. Of course, it is not an easy task to record here all the significant details of his character, temperament, milieu, activities and experiences that had gone into the making of his literature as well as the Odia literature of his time. In the matter of critical approach I have not engaged myself in comparison and contrast while trying to identify Biswanath's uniqueness and have refrained from applying various current literary theories and critical parameters to his works. Biswanath's literary pursuit is so vast and varied and his other

literary engagements so extensive and diverse that just a proper brief synopsis of all that would require a much larger space than we could afford here. Hence, I have restricted myself to brief critical evaluations of his major works, their themes, persuasions, forms and modes of expressions to give an idea about the characteristic idiom, experience and trends of Biswanath's writings.

This study will provide the readers with a short but close account of Biswanath, the man and the writer who happens to be a powerful perceptive and eminent modern Odia writer as well as magazine-editor and one of the makers of Indian literature I hope, it will meet the expectations of readers and satisfy their interest and they will be moderately acquainted with Biswanath, his works and his contribution to Odia literature.

Finally, I am grateful to Sahitya Akademi for assigning me the task to write this monograph. I am thankful to Gourahari Das, Convener, Odia Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi and Bijayananda Singh, President, Utkal Sahitya Samaj for their help and encouragement. I am indebted to Utkal Sahitya Samaj, Cuttack and Odisha Sahitya Academy, Bhubaneswar for making materials on Biswanath Kar available to me for completing the work.

Bijaya Kumar Nanda

Life and Times

Biswanath Kar was born on 24 December 1864 at Mulabasanta on the banks of the river Birupa. The village was under the police station limits of Mahanga in the district of Cuttack. Biswanath belonged to the noted Kar family of the village. It is said that during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Rudra, the Gajapati King of Utkal, the Brahmins of Kar dynasty had come from Maharashtra to Odisha at the king's behest and settled at this place for the first time and hence this place was called Mulabasati (implying an original settlement) and later it came to be known as Mulabasanta.

Biswanath was the eldest child of Narayan Chandra Kar and Vaidehi Kar. Since he was the first male child of a joint family he had received a lot of love and affection from the very day of his birth. From his childhood his father Narayan Chandra and Uncle Madhab Chandra had made every effort to mould him into an ideal human being. Biswanath had three younger brothers, namely, Lokanath, Bholanath and Krushna Chandra. Since his uncle Madhab Chandra did not have a child for a long time, he had adopted Bholanath as his son. Bholnath was the most talented, fearless and independent - minded among the four brothers.

Biswanath's father Narayan Chandra had received traditional education that prevailed in Odisha during his time. He was well versed in Indian scriptures. He was an ideal home-maker and known for his dedication to truth, discipline and justice. Narayan Chandra was also a noted singer. He could recite Puranas, the sacred literary texts of the Hindus with elan and enchant the audience.

Biswanath's mother Vaidehi was a kind-hearted woman. Her heart melted with pity when she saw or heard about the sorrows and sufferings of others. As she was generous to a fault, she had to bear with the bitter reproaches of the members of her family.

Still, without caring for such reproaches, she used to help the needy according to her capacity.

His uncle Madhab Chandra was a very good teacher. He was educated at a normal school in Cuttack and later taught in a school established by the British government at Baragarh of the then Sambalpur. He gave major part of his earning to his elder brother Narayan Chandra to meet the household expenses of their joint family.

Biswanath was, first, taught by an elementary school teacher named Govinda. Govinda taught him the Devanagari script and art of conversation in Sanskrit. During this period Biswanath learnt many mythological stories and anecdotes from his father which had a lot of influence on his later life as a litterateur. Thereafter he went to a Sanskrit school at Bhakud. In the mean time, he had also acquired some knowledge of Sanskrit from Pandit Brajabandhu Kar of his village. At Bhakuda, he was able to attract the attention of all the teachers because of his proficiency in Sanskrit grammar and Sanskrit literature. All of them were astonished to see his extraordinary intelligence, wonderful memory, the range of his scholarship and the power of assimilation of difficult subjects. He learnt Kavyas, grammar and rhetorics at this school. The knowledge he acquired during this period in Sanskrit had a great influence on his essays written in later life. Infact, he owes a great deal to his primary learning of Sanskrit which impacted on his essays where he used solemn words and passages with well-arranged syntactic sentences.

After studying Sanskrit in the village school at Bhakuda he joined a Middle English shool at Kuanpal. He was comparatively older than other students of his class. Biswanath found that the village Kuanpal was famous for the practice of fine arts and music as well as religious discussions. But the moral character of the people was not good and most of them were corrupt and in the name of religion, ugly things happened. Seeing these things, Biswanth was deeply wounded at heart and he became indifferent towards traditional religion. He saw religious ceremonies observed with pomp and ceremony, but they lacked purity and

true religious spirit. So from these days he developed a strong aversion towards the social and religious customs of society.

After studying Sanskrit in the village school at Bhakuda he joined the Middle English school of Kuanpal. After completing Middle English education he got himself admitted in Pyarimohan Academy at Cuttack in 1882. Before appearing at the Entrance Examination he was perturbed at the unjust behaviour of a teacher of the school. He protested against the unjust behaviour and left the school inspite of the entreaties of his friends and relatives not to do so. Although he joined Mission school of Cuttack he could not appear at the Entrance Examination and left Mission school in 1885. His school education came to an end. Now he started searching for a job. In January 1886 he became the Headmaster of the M.F. school at Birol in Jagatsinghpur.

He was inspired by the personality and exemplary conduct of Pyarimohan when he was a student of Pyarimohan Academy. Being inspired by his example he developed an affinity for qualities such as honesty, fellow-feeling, courage, and love for humanity. During his stint of student life at this school he came in contact with Kapileswar Vidyabybhusan, a famous scholar and litterateur of Cuttack and became interested in literary discussions. In fact, Kapileswar was his literary guru. Kapileswar helped him not only in learning of Sanskrit literateure but also Odia literature. At his place, Biswanath discussed the works of Upendra Bhanja, Abhimanyu Samanta Simhar and Kavisurya Baladev Rath et al. He also came in contact with Saintly Madhusudan who was called Bhakta Kavi (a devout poet). From the very moment Biswanath saw his suave and serene countenance and heard his lucid discourse on (several issues) of Brahmadharma at a prayer meeting, Biswanath voluntarily accepted him as his guru and preceptor. The fickleness of his boyhood left him very soon. Like an adult he started looking at society.

His father's uprightness and disciplined life had greater influence on Biswanath than his early education. Moreover, he had acquired the quality of liberal generosity from his mother. During his high school career he came under the influence of Mahdusudan Rao who led a saintly life. So he became just and

disciplined in life. In spite of the various hurdles in life, never did he stray from the path of truth, virtue and righteousness.

Following the tradition of child marriage existing at his time, he had married an eight-year-old girl named Janaki in 1876 when he was only twelve years old. At this tender age he began to question the old customs, various superstitions and blind beliefs prevailing in Odia society. He had observed that the bane of casteism was prevailing in Odisha and the problem was severe in the rural areas. Society was divided along class lines, the higher class people, zamindars, landlords and the priestly class, exploited and oppressed the poor people. The hypocrite Brahmins enforced different rituals in society in the name of religion. The Brahmins, enjoying the support of rajas, maharajas and zamindars ruled over the religious and social life of millions of innocent men and women. Biswanath's youthful spirit revolted against this morally degraded higher class people of the villages. By doing this he drew their ire and they strongly opposed him.

During this period the rise of Brahmadharma had brought about a revolutionary change in the Indian society. Its ideals and ideas became popular with the people. The purpose of Brahmadharma founded by Raja Rammohan Ray was to create a new awakening among the Hindus and remove superstitions and blind beliefs from society. In fact, it was a kind of reformed Hinduism with its belief in Brahma, the Creator God. This new Brahmadharma was completely opposed to the dominance the Brahmins, casteism and idol-worship. In order to propagate the new ideas, Raja Rammohan Ray had established 'Brahmasabha' (An Association of Brahmas) in Calcutta in the year 1827. As a result, the ideals of Brahmadharma became very much popular among the newly educated people. Gradually, branches of Brahmasabha were opened in different provinces of India and these Brahmasabhas played an important role in socio-religious awakening. Brahmasamaj of Cuttack was established in Odisha in the year 1819.

When Biswanath Kar came to Cuttack, Madhusudan Rao, Chaturbhuja Patnaik, Sadhucharan Ray, et al were the leading lights of Brahmasamaj. With his progressive outlook, Biswanath

was naturally attracted by the ideals and rules and regulations of Brahmasamaj that imposed discipline on the daily lives of its members. For a whole year, Biswanath read different books related to Brahmadharma and Brahmasamaj. The books he studied and the knowledge he acquired convinced him that Brahmadharma is the best religion for an individual. During this period, he edited two magazines, namely *Samaj* and *Samskaraka* which were published by Chaturbhuja Patnaik until he left Cuttack to take the job as a Headmaster at Birol. He was associated with all the activities of Brahmasamaj. He was not perturbed by the adverse comments of Hindus who hated and ridiculed him and called him an infidel.

Biswanath joined the M.F. school of Birol as Headmaster in January 1886. But he faced many problems for practising the basic principles of Brahmadharma. He had a hunch that as long as he stayed there, he wouldn't be able to convert from Hinduism to Brahmadharma. In 1887 he was blessed with a son. During the ritualistic worship and celebration on the 21st day of birth of the child he was asked to perform certain rituals and give some gift of gold to the Brahmins. He refused to do those things. Thus this break of the social custom had shown his zeal for social reform. In the mean time, his two younger brothers, Lokanath and Bholanath were drawn to Brahmadharma. Without any inhibition they discussed freely the merits of this new religion. Some young men joined them and they formed a group. Biswanath also found a friend at Birol, with whom, he frequently discussed the ideas and ideals of Brahmadharma and prayed in a lonely place. This prayer brought clarity to his mind. He felt an overwhelming desire to act according to his own conviction.

Biswanath started criticizing the prevailing customs, practices, rituals as well as immorality and wrongdoings of society. He also criticized the existent made of worship. Although his criticism of social practices created a ripple of protest in society, his two younger brothers Lokanath and Bholanath and two of his relations Udayanath and Balabhadra supported his ideas wholeheartedly. Biswanath left Birol in 1887 to propagate his new ideas. Being inspired by him, his two younger brothers Lokanath and Bholanath

threw away their sacred thread and rosaries used by Hindu Brahmins and embraced Brahmadharma at Cuttack. This conversion to a different faith had its impact in his workplace at Birol; as a result of which Biswanath had to quit his job. For propagating Brahmadharma he had to face humiliation, hatred, censure, rancour and ridicule of the public. But he moved ahead like a mighty hero without caring for adverse opinions of the people. His only recourse at that time was silent prayer as well as deep love for God. At this time he felt a strong urge to leave his job and give up his responsibilities and activities at Birol. Without delay, he handed over the charge of the school to the secretary of the institution and came back to Cuttack. Being requested by the authorities of Mission School he joined the institution as an Assistant Teacher. While working at this school he tore his sacred thread, a symbol of the Hindu Brahmin and embraced Brahmadharma. At Madhusudan Rao's behest he resigned from that school and joined the school established by Madhusudan Rao. This school was later named Victoria School and now it is Bhaktamadhu Vidyapitha. From the day of his initiation into Bhahmadharma he played a significant role in preaching and propagating this new dharma. His conversion to Brahmadharma created a storm in his family and his family could not accept this conversion.

After being initiated into Brahmadharma he was staying in a rented house at Alamchand bazaar in Cuttack along with his two younger brothers, Lokanath and Bholanath. But, unfortunately, Lokanath who had got a medical degree and was appointed as a doctor at Jajpur by the government suddenly died of severe stomachache and the other brother Bholanath who had passed Entrance Examination died of cholera. The premature death of the two brothers in quick succession in the year 1889 hurt Biswanath terribly. In such difficult situation, when he visited his house, he was not allowed to take his food inside the house because he was excommunicated by the village society for being a believer and follower of Brahmadharma. He was served food on a leaf outside the house as it was done to the untouchables of

the time. Inspite of all such discrimination and humiliation Biswanath was completely unperturbed.

In 1891, with the permission of his father and the consent of his wife he brought wife, Janaki to his residence at Cuttack. But his son was not allowed to come to Cuttack to live with his parents and he stayed with his grand-parents. Now he led a harmonious and peaceful family life. Within the next seven years he became the father of two more sons and two daughters.

After Biswanath's wife came to live with him at Cuttack, his life as a literary man started. He had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He read books of Emerson, Carlyle and Parker and great works of Sanskrit, Bengali and Odia literature. Of course, during this period he was working for Brahmasamaj and was editing two monthly magazines. Eminent Odia writers of that period such as Radhanath and Fakirmohan were attracted to him when they came to know about his potentiality and interest in literature. Infact, Radhanath was the chief inspiration for him to become a litterateur.

As a writer Biswanath, first, attempted to write essays. He was not the first essayist in Odia literature. Before him, Radhanath Ray, Madhusudan Rao, and Kapilaswar Vidyabhusan et al had written essays in Odia. But essay writing in Odia was perfected by Biswanath. His deep knowledge of Sanskrit and English Language and his study of Bengali literature had helped him in perfecting the form. During his time, besides Radhanath and Madhusudan, the leading exponents of Odia essay were Ramashankar Ray, Govinda Rath, Gopinath Nanda, Gopalchandra Praharaj, Shashibhushan Ray, Jagabandhu Singh, Padmacharan Patnaik, Mohinimohan Senapati, Mrytyunjay Rath, Pyarimohan Acharya, Jalandhra Dev, Chandrasekhar Nanda et al.

Radhanath's essay bore the real experiences of life and it preached morality as we see in his long essay 'Vibeki'. Although the ideas of this essay are valuable it lacked the glitter of prose writing and naturalness of language. Madhusudan wrote essays on various subjects. But his essays are replete with idealism and noble thoughts, so much so that those essays become tedious for an ordinary reader. Fakirmohan was primarily a fiction writer

and fiction writing (both novels and short stories) was his forte. But he wrote philosophical, anthropological, historical, biological and literary essays and essays intended to bring reformation in society. His essays were, no doubt, characterized by simple language and skilfulness in expression. Biswanath published his collection of Essay, *Bibidha Prabandha* (Various Essays) in 1896. With this publication he turned out to be the best essayist of his time.

Biswanath's essays proved that he was an extremely talented Odia essayist. Most of his essays were written during the last twelve years of his teaching career. Twenty essays selected from his writings were compiled and published as *Bibidha Prabandha* (Various Essays). All these essays were previously published in different Odia magazines such as *Asha*, *Utkal Prava* and *Sambalpur Hiteishini*.

For writing the essay, Biswanath had adopted a prose style that was articulate, unambiguous and intelligible, spontaneous and powerful. He had dealt with various social, political, educational and literary issues. No essayist before him had written such thought-provoking and logical essays of the highest order with persuasive arguments.

Prior to the publication of his collection of essays Biswanath had published a travelogue titled *Bhramana Brutanta* (An Account of My Travel) in 1895. It was also first published in *Sambalpur Histeishini*. This travelogue reveals Biswanath's dedication to work and his love of nature.

During Biswanath's time Odia literature was entering into its modern phase. But very few magazines were there to spread modern Odia literature. A few magazines were there but they were not regularly published or ceased publication due to the dearth of organizational skill, funds crunch and want of writings of high standard. The names of such magazines were *Pradeep*, *Sayabadi Madhupa* and *Asha* etc. Hence some writers wanted the regular publication of a monthly magazine that could publish the writings of authors both young and old. With the help and encouragement of such eminent persons as Radhanath Ray, Madhusudan Rao, Fakirmohan Senapati, Krushna Prasad

Choudhury, Chandramohan Maharana, and Sadhucharan Ray and mostly of Biswanath Kar a literary magazine named *Utkal Sahitya* was published for the first time in 1896. Biswanath was selected to act as the editor and Krushna Prasad was selected as the manager of the magazine.

After two years of publication, the magazine was beset with difficulties such as funds crunch and lack of a printing press. But Biswanath was firmly determined to publish the magazine regularly. To solve the problems, Biswanath sought financial help from rich and generous people through appeals in the magazine but to no avail. Still Biswanath was not disappointed. He approached his friends and relatives, important persons, Rajas and Maharajas and appealed for financial help. This time, he did not fail in his mission. With the financial help he got, Utkal Sahitya press was established at Balubazar of Cuttack on 10th January 1900. Now it was much easier to publish the magazine. Because he had to run from door to door seeking financial help for the magazine he left his job as Headmaster of Town School, which was the only means of support for his livelihood.

Now the magazine was published regularly. With the help this magazine, Biswanath tried to develop and enrich Odia literature. He published the writings of both old and new writers of the time in *Utkal Sahitya*. Initially essays and poems of eminent writers like Radhanath, Madhusudan, and Krushna Prasad were published in the magazine. From 1897 till 1934, the year of his death he became the friend and critic of Odia writers and provided them with support and encouragement. For nearly fifty years Biswanath was the focal point of Odia literature. The *Utkal Sahitya* edited by him became prestigious magazine. It was of such high standard that when a poem or a short story of a young writer was published in this magazine it was treated as a matter of great prestige and honour. Whenever Biswanath saw creative talent in anybody he encouraged the person to write. In *Mayurbhanj Gazette* it says, "His youthful vigour and zeal, and his fatherly treatment toward young writers will be lovingly remembered by all those who came in contact with him". Annada Sankar Ray, one of the poets of Sabuj group wrote: "Biswanath Kar is the friend, philosopher

and guide of young writers". Again after reading the magazine some were encouraged to write. Biswanath had so much commitment for the magazine that once he said. "I don't know what will happen to this magazine after my death. But as long as I am alive, as long as there is a penny in my purse, *Utkal Sahitya* won't cease to be published".

Utkal Sahitya was regularly published for a period of thirty eight years. The editorials, voluminously speak about Biswanath's scholarship, wisdom and editorial ability. His editorials appeared under the generic title, *Bibidha Prasanga* (Various Topics). His editorials were characterized by deep contemplation, correctness of language, beauty, charm, liberality, ratiocination and above all, a deep moral concern. His analysis of problems was always objective and free from prejudice. He expressed his thoughts and feelings frankly in simple and intelligible language. Natabar Samantarya, a famous Odia critic has appreciated Biswanath's editorials by saying that his suggestions for solving contemporary problems, his fearless criticism and his deep foresight for the development of Odia society and literature are very much memorable in the whole history of Odia literature.

Being published from 1897 till 1934, *Utkal Sahitya* has fulfilled its aim. It is said that *Utkal Sahitya* Press was like a factory from where writers were produced. *Utkal Sahitya* provided encouragement and enthusiasm to writers of three generations. *Utkal Sahitya* was not merely a literary magazine; it had created a literary movement in Odisha.

For a period of about thirty eight years, Biswanath was a prominent figure in Odia national life. He had also joined the national movement of India. There had been demonstrations in the streets in the wake of the partition of Bengal on October 16 in 1905. Biswanath protested against this partition severely and organized meetings and demonstrations and delivered speeches against the partition in Cuttack.

Biswanath loved Odisha and Odia language very much. He was selected as a member of Bihar – Odisha Legislative Council for a period of five years in 1912. By delivering his speech in Odia in the Legislative Council for the first time he had created

history and paid respect to his mother tongue, Odia. During those days it was the convention to deliver speeches in English. When the non-Odia members protested against Biswanath's delivery of speech in Odia, Biswanath had firmly asserted: "Odia is an ancient language; I am an Odia, my language is Odia. None of the honourable members present here has the right to obstruct me from speaking in Odia". The Governor had intervened in the matter and allowed Biswanath to deliver his speech in the Odia language.

Biswanath was a powerful orator like Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and Madhusudan Das of his time. His eloquent and powerful speeches enchanted the audience. The audience at the meetings used to be stupefied by his heart-touching speeches delivered in a solemn tone. Fakir Mohan, an eminent writer of Odisha has paid tribute to Biswanath for his eloquent speeches by saying that Biswanath's speeches flow like flood water. Because of his ability to deliver eloquent speeches people called him 'Bagmi Biswanath' (Biswanath, the Eloquent Speaker).

Biswanath was a multifaceted genius. He used to respect tradition and rules and regulations of society although he was against superstitious and blind beliefs. His demeanour, food habits and dressing habits were typically those of Odisha. He wore simple dresses and was never ostentations in his dressing habits. He used to wear a *dhoti*, a *chadar* and an angi (a type of short – sleeved shirt) while attending a meeting or attending ceremonial occasions. Even he put on this ensemble while attending meetings at the Governor's house or at parties, official programmes and at functions. When he was asked by a friend why he was wearing such dresses instead of formal official dresses he said that he was observing the national dress code of Odisha. Again, he advised the friend that we, as Odias, should imitate their nationalistic spirit, not their dressing habits.

With the efforts of Madhusudan Rao, Biswanath, Fakirmohan, Mrutyunjay Rath, Gopabandhu, Praharaj, Krushna Prasad Choudhury and Nandakishore Bal, et al Utkal Sahitya Samaj (The Literary Society of Utkal) was established on 7th may 1903 for the protection of Odia language and development of Odia literature. This institution has been successful in doing the same

till now. In fact, Utkal Sammilani and *Utkal Sahitya* Samaj were the nerve centres of Odia renaissance. *Utkal Sahitya* Samaj thrived under the able leadership of Madhusudan Rao and Biswanath Kar, the first president and first secretary of the institution. Biswanath was the co-president of the institution from 1914 to 1926. He was also the president of this literary society for some time. Infact, Biswanath was the chief inspiration behind the establishment of Utkal Sahitya Samaj and Sri Ramachandra Bhavan where it is located. He was a life member of this institution.

The rare achievements of Biswanath in the fields of literary creation, editing and publication of magazine, development and spread of literature and literary organization are a matter of pride for Odisha. As an office bearer of Utkal Sahitya Samaj he had a lot of dreams for Odia literature. By the year 1927, Biswanath had purchased a piece of land in Kaligali of Cuttack and established *Utkal Sahitya* Press there in January 1900. *Utkal Sahitya* continued to be published from this place.

He, along with his family, lived in the press premises. He spent his life happily and peacefully. He led a disciplined family life following the tenets of Brahmadharma. He became an ideal husband and an ideal father. After embracing Brahmadharma he had fathered two sons and three daughters. They were Mahananda, Purnananda, Narmada, Prativa, and Suprava. Before converting to this new faith he had fathered another son named Mayadhar about whom hints have already been given. He, along with his wife, had transformed their family into a blessed one.

From his very childhood Biswanath was religious minded. Righteousness was the most distinguishing feature of his character. As he could not do anything for removing social and religious hypocrisy from the Hindu society in which he was born he had converted to Brahmadharma. For this conversion he had to suffer from social and economic deprivation and utter penury but he surrendered at the lotus feet of the infinite Brahma who is an abode of truth and knowledge. He struggled throughout his life but never was he afraid of anybody or anything and did not stray from the right path. With silent prayer, determined effort and firm faith in God he became an achiever. He performed the

duties assigned to him by Brahma Samaj. Besides, he delivered speeches about the essence of Brahmadharma mostly in Odisha and occasionally in Bengal. He was among the three persons to found Cuttack Brahma Mandir, the two others were Madhusudan Rao and Chaturbhuja Patnaik. Emphatically, he used to say that truth, honesty, love, generosity and moral character are closely related to religion. Personally, when he accepted something as true, never did he abandon it. Although he had accepted Brahmadharma, he did not look down upon any other religion. For him the essential truths of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity were the same. Even he did not hate idol worship of Hinduism. He was of opinion that if one overcomes the narrowness of a particular religion he will be able to discover universal love.

Apart from his devotion to literature and love for Brahmadharma he was very much interested in social service. He knew that one's holistic development depends upon one's education. So for the all round development of his village he established a higher primary school for boys and another for the girls in his village, Mulabasanta. A special feature of both of these schools was that students belonging to both higher castes and lower castes studied together. For the benefit of the villagers, he established a night school where illiterate men and women irrespective of colour, caste and creed became students. For increasing the reading habit of the people he established a library called 'Kara Bansha Pathagar'. With his encouragement a hand-written magazine called *Aloka* (Light) was published by the students of his village, Mulabasanta. He used to correct and edit the writings of those students and give comments on each writing and thus encouraged the students to write. With his patronage a hand-written magazine *Jyotsna* (Moon light) for the students at High School level and another called *Koumudi* (Moonlight) for students at college level were published. In the mean while his relationship with his villagers which had turned sour as he converted into Brahmadharma improved. The same Biswanath who was once castigated and censured was now held in high esteem by the villagers.

Before Biswanath, Radhanath and Fakirmohan had laid the

foundation of modern Odia literature. Biswanath worked throughout his life for its growth and development. Overcoming many hurdles he edited and published *Utkal Sahitya* regularly for a long period of thirty eight years. Beginning from the noted poet, Radhanath said to be the first modern Odia poet, all the famous writers of Odisha had published some of their works in *Utkal Sahitya* and all of them were grateful to Biswanath, the editor of the magazine. Moreover, with the inspiration and encouragement of Biswanath many new writers published their writings in *Utkal Sahitya*, of course, after those were properly corrected and edited by Biswanath. At that time, *Utkal Sahitya* edited by Biswanath was the touchstone for determining the quality of writings. The high standard of the magazine was maintained by Biswanath from its inception till the end.

Unto his last, even in old age he was an avid reader of books and magazines written in English and Bengali. He was a regular reader of most of the Bengali magazines and some English magazines. Very often he read *Jeevana Veda* of Keshabchandra and the *Bible*. Both ideas and language through which ideas are expressed are important for a piece of writing. As Biswanath was very much aware of this fact, there were no contradictions or unreasonable ideas and linguistic errors or grammatical mistakes in the essays and articles published in *Utkal Sahitya* edited and published by him. His own essays were serious, novel and they introduced refined taste and new style into the domain of modern prose literature. His essays were sweet and simple but thought provoking. Those show Biswanath's critical bent of mind. With his clear understanding of various issues and deft command of Odia language .Biswanath was the creator of ideal prose literature of the modern era in Odisha.

Biswanath was an ideal citizen and an influential man of his time. He was a member of the managing committee of Ravenshaw College, of Cuttack Training College, of the District Board and Municipal Council, Engineering School of Cuttack, Muslim Seminary and Victoria School. Recognizing his abilities in different fields, his love for the people and activities for their benefit the British Government decided to decorate him with the title of

Raisaheb in 1931 but he politely refused to accept it by saying that he never worked for the people expecting a title of honour from the government. He did it because he thought God would be happy with him for his social service. Thus Biswanath had a broad heart and he had no selfish interest.

In the field of politics Biswanath was a liberal. He was an advocate for the use of goods produced in his own country and throughout his life he used such goods. When non-cooperation movement against the Britishers started in India, farsighted Biswanath did not join it nor did he encourage anybody to join it. He edited and published a magazine *Satyasamachar* highlighting the possible consequences of non-cooperation movement. For this his opponents criticized and censured him but he was not at all perturbed.

Just two months before his death, Biswanath suffered from a strange pain in his stomach. Doctors advised him rest. Now he spent his time by talking with his friends and relatives and reading different books and newspapers. After a few days the doctors advised him to come out and do his usual work. On 17th October he did not have good sleep at night. On 18th October, all on a sudden, his body began to sweat profusely. Doctors were sent for. Gradually his pulse and heart beating slowed and he experienced excruciating pain. He was given injections but to no avail. Remaining senseless throughout the night of 18th October, he breathed his last at 5:30 in the morning of 19th October 1934.

Biswanath was not a prolific author nor was he versatile writer. But he succeeded in writing and editing the magazine Utkal Sahitya. He has written essays, thought-provoking books on Brahmadharma, fine editorials, Bibidha Prasanga (Various Topics and brief discussions on authors and their works) a travelogue and a brief autobiography.

Biswanath earned fame, first, as an essayist. His collection of essays, entitled *Bibidha Prabandha* (Various Essays) was published in 1896. It was a collection of twenty essays. Although he was not the first essayist he had perfected Odia essay and made it a vehicle of serious thought pertaining to society, literature, religion, Odia language, polities, history and the lives of eminent men.

Although he wrote some subjective essays, most of his essays were objective.

He was the chief inspiration behind publication of the Odia magazine, *Utkal Sahitya*. He was its editor and he turned out to be an editor par excellence. *Utkal Sahitya* published regularly from 1897 till 1934 was not merely a literary magazine, it heralded a literary movement in Odisha and Odia literature gained momentum during the period of its publication. The editorials Biswanath wrote in this namagzine show his intelligence, vision, concern and sympathy for people and society. His 'Bibihda Prasanga' (Various Topics) and Samkhipta Alochana' (Brief Discussions) published in *Utkal Sahitya* were valuable and enlightening.

Biswanath had written a book, *Brahmadharma Tattwa* (The Nature of Brahmadharma) and it was published by Utkal Brahmasamaj in 1918. In this book Biswanath has introduced this religion to the people and he discussed its significance, the modes of worship of Brahma, the social conduct of the followers of this religions and its influence on people. In this book, Biswanath has established that this dharma is based on truth.

He has written a travelogue which was published in 1895 in the magazine *Sambalpur Heteishini* where he depicts, nature, people, kingdoms and writes about kings, customs and tradition of people, their social and individual lives. In his brief autobiography he has written about his childhood, his growth, education, family life, conversion to Bhamadharma, his profession as a teacher and his life as an editor and a litterateur.

Biswanth's literary career spanned for a period of fifty years beginning from 1885 when he edited *Samskaraka* till 1934, the year of his death. Biswanath's literary-intellectual curiosity, his interest in enriching Oida literature and language and his urge for social reform were insatiable. He led the life of a revolutionary fighter. Throughout his life he was against superstitions that passed for tradition. He wanted a new tradition to be built which would be free from superstitions, blind beliefs, and characterised by social harmony, women's empowerment, up-liftment of the

masses including the so called lower castes, fellow feeling, worship of the worthy, nationality spirit and love for one's language and literature. Through his writings and activities he wanted to bring about reformation in society. His essays, editorials, writings on various topics and brief discussions provide ample testimony to this fact. He was not a sectarian in the fields of religion, society or literature. He had strong commitments for Odia society, for Odia language and literature. In every field, may it be social, political, familial, literary, religious or political, Biswanath was committed to truth. He had faith in God and he did his duties following strict rules of moral conduct.

Biswanath lived a life of about seventy years. Familial trouble and material wants did not shake his faith in God and the divine dispensation. It also did not deter him from acting according to his conscience and conviction. Whenever he was in distress or he had some trouble he prayed to God and soon was able to overcome the distress or the trouble. As he believed in the efficacy of prayer he used to pray to God after awakening from sleep in the morning, before going to bed at night and before taking his meals.

He worked for Odisha, worked for its all round development. He worked with a spirit of dedication and sacrifice without caring for praise or censure. Biswanath was a self-made man and also a man of strong personality. Never did he hesitate to express his independent opinion. Although he was not highly educated, his knowledge of Odia, Bengali and English was very wide. With his strong sense of morality, indomitable courage, great patience and deep love for Odia society, language and literature, and above all, for his oratory he could become a great man of his time.

In the literary field Biswanath workd as an essayist, a writer of religious books, an editor, a travelogue-writer and writer of autobiography. He has made his mark in these areas of literature. His works have generated interest among a large number of people. He was a role-model for Odia essayists and magazine-editors. He tested success and fame. His works have been read with much interest. His zeal for Odia literature and Odia language

was unequalled. He was much concerned about Odia literature and particularly about the magazine *Utkal Sahitya* till the very end of his life. For him it was the part and parcel of his life and Oida literature was the be all and end all of his existence. His writings reveal a rare power and beauty surpassed by few Odia writers and editors of his time.

The Writings

When Biswanath began his career as a writer the British rule in India had brought about a great change in its wake in the cultural sphere of India. The Western influence acted as a great stimulus to literary creations in our country. The new forms and techniques of literary writing, concern for common man and fresh approach towards nature stirred the imagination of litterateurs of Odisha. Biswanath had read avidly the works of Carlyle, Emerson and Parker. He was very much influenced particularly by Carlyle's social criticism, particularly his attack on British materialism and the country's lack of appreciation of real heroes and its formalism in religion. Carlyle had taught him the moral value of work, the importance of duty and the need for a spiritual rebirth. He had learned from Carlyle to hold individualistic religious views. Carlyle had published a series of lectures on Heroes and Hero-worship (1838-41). In 1843 he had published *Past and Present* which glorified simple life. In his *On Heroes and Hero-worship* there was a chapter named 'The Hero as a man of Letters' and here he had written that the writers play a prophetic role by providing moral guidance to the common readers. All these ideas had profound influence on Biswanath.

He had imbibed the spirit of believing in one God from Emerson. Emerson believed that God is omnipresent and benevolent and He is the Over-Soul and a source of spiritual energy. God is immanent in man. Biswanath believed in all these things and also came to believe in the radicalism of Emerson's *The American Scholar* where he writes that no intermediary like Church, preachers and scared books should come between God and his devotee. As Emerson had attacked formalized, historical Christianity, Biswanath, becoming a convert to Brahmadharma, had attacked in his writings formalized, traditional and rigid Hinduism which was full of superstitions and blind beliefs at his

time. From Parker he had learnt about mild attack on social evils and his cutting wit.

When Biswanath came to the literary scene the modern age in Odia literature had already started. It had started with Radhanath, Fakirmohan et al. Odia literature had already assimilated a number of new forms and attitudes from the West and harmonized them with indigenous styles, moods and perspectives. The new forms of lyric and narrative poetry, drama and novel, essay and short story were being handled with elan. Rahdanath and Fakirmohan were the most skilled innovators but Madhusudan, Gangadhar and Nandakishore also were bringing new changes in Odia literary domain.

Radhanath's high romantic passion, minute description of nature, his unconventional narrative subjects and taboo themes, artistic as well as satirical composition; Madhusudan's moral and devotional fervour leading to mystic songs, Nandakishore's poetry of the idyllic country side combining native folk life and folk culture with English romanticism and Gangadhar's unique description of nature and his wonderful integration of the realistic and the visionary, providing a rich poetic justification for Indian ethics and spirituality were being integrated into the modern tradition. Similarly, the great fictional achievements of Fakirmohan who modernized the fictional tradition in Odia making it realistic, psychological, critical and historically significant in so far as it went beyond all contemporary fiction in the country became a part of this tradition. And in the field of drama, Ramshankar and others had made ground breaking experiments and enriched the tradition.

Biswanath discovered that he had the talent to write essays, so he wrote essays and enriched the tradition of essay writing and contributed to this field in the modern period of Odisha. His essays combined learned and colloquial language. During his time Odia writers were seen extending their critical and creative frontier beyond the boundary of provincial tradition. They responded more and more to national and international developments and reviewed both what they had inherited from their ancestors and what they had got from the West.

Readership of Odia books and journals was increasing during Biswanath's time. Books and journals proliferated but the publication of journals was irregular. Biswanath with his chief mentor Madhusudan and others started the journal, *Utkal Sahitya* in 1897 and it published the works of both old and new writers. With the railway lines laid between Calcutta and Puri, all the literary and intellectual developments in Bengal came to be shared by Odisha. Several literary-cultural societies and associations were formed in the state. Authors and writers acquired unprecedented respectability. It is in this context of the prevailing spirit of Biswanath's times that his literary efforts are to be judged and appreciated.

We have already mentioned that Biswanath was not a prolific writer but his writings are valuable, of a high order, persuasive and thought-provoking. He published a collection of essays in 1896 entitled *Bibidha Prabandha* (Various Essays). He started editing *Utkal Sahitya* from 1897 till 1934. His editorials, writing on various topics (Bibidha Prasanga) and brief criticisms on different works of various authors bear testimony to his literary talent. His travel writing, *Bhramana Brutanta* (An Account of My Travel) was published in the magazine *Sambalpur Hiteishini* in 1895. His book entitled *Brahmadharma Tattwa* (The Essence of Brahmadharma) was published in 1918. His brief autobiography, *Nija Jeevana Kahanira Kiyadansa* (A Part of My Autobiography) was published by New Students Store Limited and edited by Chintamani Acharya.

Essay

Essay is an important form of modern Odia literature. Beforehand, Odia essays were written but they were not as logical and as artistic as modern essays. After the introduction of Western education in Odisha, Odia literature underwent a sea-change and a new era started. Beforehand essay was written in metrical form with some of the embellishments of poetry. Now essay came to be understood as a short piece of writing in prose on a particular

subject. In an essay the subject, now, was presented reasonably and the essayist with valid arguments persuaded the reader to accept his opinion or point of view. In the essay emphasis is given on thought rather than imagination, intellect rather than emotion, ratiocination rather than emotive appeal.

Generally essays are divided into personal or subjective essays and impersonal or objective essays. In a personal essay the essayist builds up a kind of closeness and intimacy with the reader. Here, the essayist doesn't write about general problems or social incidents, rather he writes on incidents about himself colouring it with his imagination. The style of personal essays is not solemn but simple, self-revealing and at times whimsical. The personal element is not there in objective or impersonal essays. In impersonal essays the writer assumes the role of a social critic and interprets social events and incidents in an objective and disciplined manner.

Under the impact of Western education the essay form became popular in Odisha as it happened in other states of India. At that time books published by Christian missionaries for propagating their religion and text books written for schools established and managed by the British Government helped indirectly the growth of modern Odia essay. Printing presses were installed at different places in Odisha. Consequently newspapers and magazines such as *Utkal Deepika*, *Baleswar Sambadabahika*, *Utkal Darpan*, *Purushottam Deepika*, *Nabasambad*, *Sambalpur Hiteishini*, *Utkal Prabha*, *Indradhanu*, *Bijuli*, etc. were published. These papers and magazines helped in the creation of many new writers by publishing their writings. In these newspapers and magazines both short and long essays on different topics were published. These papers and magazines had played a very remarkable role in the development of Odia essay.

Radhanath Ray, an eminent Odia poet, who is credited with ushering in the Modern Age in Odia literature, wrote the first modern Odia essay 'Bibeki' (The Conscientious Man). This essay was published in 1873 in the magazine *Utkal Darpan*. After Radhanath, *Bhaktakavi* Madhusudan wrote and published his *Prabandhamala* (Collection of Essays) in 1880. Madhusudan Rao

borrowed many words from Sanskrit and used the same in his essays. His essays were solemn and sonorous. Some of the essays of his collection were written by him and the rest were translated from books written in English. He had collected materials from different sources. His topics related to history, biography, politics, psychology, physical sciences, natural geography, literature and rhetorics, etc. But these two eminent writers of Odisha such as Radhanath and Madhusudan were chiefly attracted to poetry and tried to enrich modern Odia poetry. Fakirmohan Senapati, another luminary in the field of modern Odia literature who was trying hard for the development of Odia prose and fiction, became an innovator and pathfinder in Odia short story and novel-writing. At that time Biswanath discovered his potentialities in the art of essay writing and editing magazine. First, he was committed to the development of modern Odia essay. In fact, he laid the foundation of modern Odia essay. He knew his limitation and felt that he had no talent for writing other forms of literature. In an essay, 'Sahitya Charcha' (Literary Discourse) he has written: "Acquiring knowledge and skill to do something and the natural ability to do something (i.e. talent) are two different things. Everybody can acquire knowledge but nobody can acquire talent. Unfavourable circumstances make a person weak and helpless but a talented man never bothers about such circumstances. He has cited the examples of Dante and Shakespeare who became great writers in spite of their adverse circumstances. Such feelings and views speak abundantly though indirectly about Biswanath's beliefs, persuasions and inducements.

Before attempting a brief discussion of his essays we highlight here some aspects of Biswanath's personality which have a direct bearing on his essays. Biswanath was a scholar, a social critic, a judicious as well as powerful orator, an independent-minded person, learned and experienced. He lived a life full of troubles but faced it bravely. He dedicated the whole of his life to his motherland and mother tongue. Biswanath made every possible effort to enrich Odia language and literature. He became a reformer to protect human dignity and safe guard human values. Being a patriot as well as a revolutionary he was committed to

the holistic development of his motherland. His valuable suggestions for solving contemporary problems, his fearless criticism, his rare foresight for the development of Odia literature and his liberal sympathy for new writers were noteworthy.

Biswanath's collection of essays, *Bibihda Prabandha* (Various Essays) was published in 1896. Beforehand, these essays were published in magazine such as *Utkal Prabha* and *Sambalpur Hiteishini*. Of course, after the publication of this collection Biswanath published some other essays in different magazines. We have already mentioned that Biswanath was not the first modern essayist in Odia literature. Before him, writers such as Radhanath, Madhusudan and Kapileswar Vidyabhushan, et al had written essays. But Odia essay was well nourished and energised by Biswanath and it was reckoned as a powerful form of Odia literature.

Instead of writing personal essays he wrote objective and impartial essays because he had more concern for people and society than for himself. Biswanath had not written a single personal essay which can be compared with William Hazlitt's 'On Going a Journey' or Charles Lamb's 'Dream Children: A Reverie'. We get personal experience of a journey in Hazlitt's essay and in Lamb's 'Dream Children: A Reverie' we find descriptions of imaginary children of Lamb who was unmarried. In both the essays an intimacy is created between the writers and the readers. In Lamb's essay, pathetic sentiment floods the readers and they are moved with pity. But Biswanath's essays do not evoke any such emotion. His essays are intellectual and logical. His essays are well written and thought-provoking. Even in his essays on Brahmadharma to which he was converted we find no trace of his personal experience. Such essays are 'Brahmadharmara Abhyuthana O Desha Kalapatra' and 'Shariram Brahmamandiram.' In these two essays religious experience and spiritual desire have been generalized. In the first essay he speaks about the goal of human life. This goal is the ultimate meeting of the soul with Parambhrahma (The Supreme Being). In the second essay he speaks that human body is the abode or temple of Brahma, the Supreme Spirit.

Thirty essays of Biswanath are available at present. Critics have classified the essays of Biswanath into different categories. Srinibas Mishra has categorized them into social, political, philosophical and literary essays. Krushnachandra Pradhan has divided the essays into five categories such as essays dealing with education and educational reforms, essays relating to language and literature, essays concerning social and political problems, philosophical essays and biographical essays. According to the latter critic essays such as 'Stree Siksha' (Education of Women), 'Siksha' (Education) and 'Balya Sisksha' (Childhood Education) can be placed under the category 'Education and Educational Reforms'; essays such as 'Sahitya O Jeevan' (Literature and Life', 'Sahitya Charcha' (Literary Discourse) 'Sahitya O Samalochana' (Literature and Criticism) 'Jatiya' 'Jeevanare Sahityara Sthana' (The Place of Literature in National Life), 'Anadhikara Characha' (Unnecessary Interference in a Discussion) 'Gotie' Uttara' (Only One Answer), 'Bhasha Charcha' (Linguistic Discourse) 'Bhashara Apabyabahar' (Misuse of Language), and 'Kavi Upendra Bhanja' (The poet Upendra Bhanja) under the category 'Language and Literature; essays like 'Rakshasee Leela' (The Charm of the Female Demon), 'Swadhinata' (Freedom)', 'Cuttack Normal School', 'Bainacha O Gabarnament' (The Dance of the Professional Female Dancer and the Government) and 'Eka Purushia Keerti' (The Fame of a Single Generation) under the category 'Social and Political Essays'; essays such a 'Swadhina Chinta' (Freedom of Thought), 'Maha Srota' (The Great Current), 'Ananta Prema' (Infinite Love) 'Hitabadi Niti' (Benevolent Principles), 'Sadhana O Sidhi' (Perseverance and Success), 'Puratana' (Old Things) and 'Itihasa', (History) under the category philosophical essays and 'Raghubansara Deelipa' (Deelip of the Raghu Dynasty) Mibarara Shesha Swadeenraja Beerabar Amar Singh' (Amar Sing, the great warrior and the Last Independent King of Miwar), ('Adbhuta Atmotsrga' (A Strange Sacrifice), and 'Mahatma Keshabchandra Sen' (Keshabachandra Sen, the Great Soul) under the category 'Biographical Essays'. We can add another category, i.e. 'Religious Essays'. Under this category we can place essays like

'Brahmadharmara Abhyutthan O Deshakalapatra' (The Rise of Brahmadharma and place, Time and Deserving Persons), and 'Shareeram Bramamandiram' (The Body is the Abode of God).

Behind all these essays the social commitment of a nationalistic, patriotic, progressive and social reformer is at work. Through his essays Biswanath wanted to remove all superstitions from Odia society. He wanted this society to give emphasis on progressive ideas, on thinking freely rather than on mere discipline. During Biswanath's time rationalism of Marx and Spencer was replacing superstitions and blind belief of society and was occupying their place. Rational thinkers and reformers such as Raja Rammohan Ray, Keshabchandra Sen, et al, with reasonable arguments, persuaded people to discard the cold and unhealthy customs, blind beliefs and superstitions of society. They showed the difference between real religion and false religion. Biswanath was very much influenced by Keshabchandra Sen who used to say that the ideal householder should be dedicated to Brahma (The Supreme Spirit). He advised that every household should bring about a union between Western knowledge and Eastern spirituality.

Being influenced by Keshabachandra Sen, Biswanath called upon people to fight against ignorance, gender discrimination; casteism, child marriage, drinking habit and adultery. Thus, he wanted to bring about reformation in society. His message in this regard is very clear in essays such as 'Stree Shiksha' (Education of Women) and 'Rakshasee Leela' (The Charm of the Female Demon). In 'Stree Shiksha' he has highlighted the importance of women's education. In his opinion an educated woman would educate the children properly. She can be a good housewife and maintain family peace. He felt, along with literature, mathematics, history and science, etc. girls should learn home science, painting and music because these subjects would help in the enrichment of a family. He has also laid emphasis on the moral and spiritual education of women. Women should read the biographies of ideal women, sages and saints.

In 'Rakshasee Leela', he writes about the evils of prostitution and drunkenness. Even religious priests and leaders of society,

often, are not free from these temptations. Thousands of people both-young and old, married and unmarried, are attracted to these evils. These two things are detrimental to family peace. They form parts of the luxury of rich millionaires, kings and zamindars. Hence, thoughtful and conscientious people should try to remove these evils from society. Those who take to wine and women, they tread the primrose path to hell. Biswanath advises people to desist from treading this path. Thus, these two essays show the writer's social awareness and desire for reform.

In the two essays, 'Swadhina Chinta' (Thinking Freely) and 'Swadhinata' (Independence) Biswanath tries to explain true freedom. In his opinion real freedom is the freedom of the soul. In the essay, 'Swadhinata' (Independence) he says that he was happy to hear about the future independence of India from the British rule. But nothing good comes out of mere political independence which is one-sided. It cannot guarantee a blissful, happy life. What matters most is independence of the soul. In the field of politics Biswanath was a liberal. According to him, thinking freely ensures prosperity and progress of man. Thinking freely and following the path shown by conscience are very much essential for one's progress in life. In the last decade of the nineteenth century he had treated political independence as secondary and laid emphasis on spiritual independence. In 'Swadhina Chinta' he had invoked the blessings of God for the people of his nation and prayed to Him to arouse the habit of free thinking in them and by that, he thought, vitality and life force would be generated in them.

Different problems of life and the world that had stirred the mind of Biswanath have been analysed and remedies for those problems have been suggested in the philosophical essays such as 'Ananta Prema' (Infinite Love) 'Mahasrota' (The Great Current), 'Hitabadi Niti', (Utilitarian Principles)', 'Sadhana O Sidhi' (Perseverance and Success) and 'Puratana' (Old Things).

In 'Anata Prema' Biswanath says that love is the most substantial thing in human life. The purpose of human life is to love others. Love brings knowledge, purity and dutifulness in its wake. Love makes one impartial, benevolent and self-less. Love

which is born of sensual desire is not true love. True love creates heavenly feelings in the human heart and leads one on the path of man's ultimate goal.

According to the essayist, God is the source of infinite love. On the one hand He is Omnipotent and on the other hand His love is without a limit. In other words it is infinite. He loves the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the virtuous people and the sinners. Human beings consider Him as their father, mother master, friend and relative and the be-all and end-all of their life.

Heavenly love brings about great changes. When one's heart is replete with this love it makes one broad and he won't discriminate between the high and the low, and the big and the small. If man is not initiated into this infinite love he won't be happy and won't get peace of mind. He won't be liberated from mundane existence. Material love and sensual love would lead to suffering. So man should be cautious. Leaving all attachments to material things he should follow the path which would lead to God-realisation and true happiness.

In the essay 'Hitabadi Niti' (Utilitarian Principles) he has opposed the utilitarian principles of John Stuart Mill. According to John Stuart Mill and some other Western thinkers whatever gives pleasure to most people can be equated with a principle. In fact, utilitarianism is a hedonistic philosophy which believes that the right course of action is the one that will produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. Opposing utilitarian principles, Biswanath has said happiness cannot be equated with a principle. Again he has discarded some of the arguments advanced by utilitarianism. The first argument is that since there is no way to find out the nature of religion from the religious scriptures, those are dispensable. But Biswanath countered this argument by saying that though religions differ from one another in matters of rituals and modes of worship the basic principles of all the religious scriptures are the same. A leading exponent of utilitarianism, J.S. Mill says: "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility". Responding to this view Biswanath has asked why J.S. Mill

adopted the philosophy of utilitarianism leaving behind the principles propagated by Jesus Christ.

Again the believers in utilitarianism contend that religious scriptures do not give any effective advice to people about working in this world. Biswanath does not agree with them. The fault lies with them who do not read the scriptures properly. They study the scriptures only to find fault with them. In fact, human beings have led a divine life following the valuable tenets of the scriptures. From time immemorial devotees have been reading scriptures and have derived rare peace by worshipping God in accordance with the modes prescribed in them.

Castigating the utilitarian principles he has said that these principles are meant for personal happiness and comfort. These principles have been discovered and adopted by some selfish and sensual persons. According to Biswanath sensual gratification gives pleasure but to sacrifice one's life for the good of the nation gives happiness. Then which one is better and worth doing? Definitely the answer is the latter. Desire for pleasure cannot give one sense of duty.

If we think pleasure is the goal of human life and the motivating factor for all activities, we forget about the nobility of human life. In this case we give emphasis on instinctive life rather than on a rational and conscientious life. When man sacrifices his life for the sake of truth for the country, does he do it for the sake of pleasure? When he does this he does not think of pain or pleasure. He does it out of his sense of duty. For Biswanath true principle is to follow righteousness without caring for pain and pleasure. This is the essence of all religions and this is the meaning of disinterested or desireless action of Hinduism.

He cites the case of Theodore Parker who was going to hurt a turtle but was stopped from doing it, listening to the voice of his soul. His mother had described it as the voice of God in the human heart. Thus, Parker did not follow the utilitarian principle.

According to the utilitarians giving up one's self-interest completely is not sanctioned by religion. But Christ, Budhha, Chaitanya, Howard and William Booth had done that. They abandoned self-interest completely for the sake of truth and for

their countries. Had they been utilitarians they could not have done this. The utiliarians have not understood the true meaning of self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice implies that a man should sacrifice all his energy, ability, riches, honour and above all, his life to remove the sorrow and wants of others and injustice and falsehood from society. Like the utilitarian he would not seek self-interest. A Jesus Christ sacrificed his life for the good of the masses. A Damien sacrificed his life for serving the lepers: Self-sacrifice, not the pursuit of self-interest awakens the sleeping humanity. Utilitarians cannot understand the implications of self-sacrifice.

Biswanath had written an essay named 'Sadhana O Sidhi' (Perseverance and Success). It was written to counter the views of Ganapati Das expressed in his essay 'Hitabada Ki?' (Is it Utilitarianism?). At present most people work for their self-interest. Falsehood, deceit and corruption have spread throughout the country. In the past people sacrificed their lives for others without any consideration of self-interest. The writer felt that, we have to do hard work in the field of religion, morality, society, literature and several other fields. But perseverance and hard work in these fields won't go unopposed. Several obstacles will come on the way.

Those who achieve success in their efforts don't care for the obstructions and oppositions. According to the writer, without hard work and perseverance one cannot proceed at all on the path of truth and justice. Firm resolve is the basic principle of perseverance and the only means to achieve success. When one is determined to do good work God Himself comes forward to help him. In this context Biswanath has quoted Carlyle who had said. "Are not all true men that live or that ever lived, soldiers of the same army, enlisted under Heaven's captaincy, to do battle against the same enemy the empire of Darkness and Wrong?"

Biswanath intends to say that all honest men are the soldiers of God who is their only commander. Their duty is not to fight out of self-interest. They are commanded by God to fight against untruth, injustice and ignorance. One should realize this truth, surrender before God, carry out His instructions at all times and

then he will prove himself to be a real human being. By sacrificing his life in such a struggle he becomes successful in life.

Essays such as 'Sahitya O Jeevan' (Literature and Life), 'Jatiya Jeevanare Sahityara Sthana' (The Place of Literature in National Life), 'Sahitya O Samalochana' (Literature and Criticism), 'Bhasha Charcha' (Linguistic Discourse), and 'Kavi Upendra Bhanja' (The Poet Upendra Bhanja) are essays relating to literature and literary criticism. In these essays, the nature of literature, its significance and usefulness, the problem of using language in literature and serving the cause of literature have been discussed. These essays show the essayist's dedication to facts and his analytical mode of writing. The essays are very much useful in so far as they give information about the condition of literature and about literary practices at that time. In the essay 'Jatiya Jeevanare Sahityara Sthana' (The place of Literature in National Life), the essayist says that literature acts as a vital link among the people of a nation. It binds the people of a nation together. It also acts as a link with the past. Again, it is a manifestation of the hopes and aspirations of national life and it makes national life stronger. Finally, by observing literature, we can determine the level of progress and development of a nation.

In an essay, 'Anadhikara Charcha' (Meddling) he criticizes writers, who pretend to be poets without having any poetic inspiration. Much care, effort, learning and perseverance are needed to try one's hand at other forms of literature but poetry is mostly personal. But if one does not have poetic inspiration he cannot write good poetry. Mere versification with pauses and rhyming lines is not poetry. If a writer takes mere versification for poetry, poetry will lose its value and it won't be helpful for anybody.

In a critical essay 'Kavi' Upendra Bhanja' Biswanath has referred to four established poets of *Ritiyuga*. They are Upendra Bhanja, Dinakrushna Das, Abhimanyu Samanta Simhara and Kavisurya Baladev Rath. But he has discussed Upendra Bhanja objectively. In his opinion criticism should be neither idolatrous nor iconoclastic. It should be impartial. So he has found out both the merits and demerits of Bhanja's poetry.

Generally, there are two types of poets. The first kind write poetry limited by place and time. The poetry of the second kind of poets transcends both place and time and become universal. With the passage of time as the taste of readers changes the poetry of the first kind loses appeal. The poets of the second kind are great poets who not only give delight by their beautiful creations but also educate the readers completely. Bhanja, according to the essayist, was a poet of the first kind. Biswanath has two arguments in favour of his opinion. First, when Bhanja's poetry is translated into another language, it loses its beauty and charm. Second, when Bhanja's poetry is summarised its ideas do not appeal to anyone. Works of great workers such as *Raghubansha*, *Kumara Sambhava*, and *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* of Kalidas or *Uttararamacharita* of Bhavabhuti, when translated into another language, instruct and delight the readers with their valuable ideas. Those are not solely based on poetic technique and free play of imagination.

Bhanja's power, ability and name are chiefly based on his poetic style. Of course, he should be credited very much for his poetic style. His knowledge of Odia language, control over diction, sound, tone. and idiom both classical and contemporary are unique and rarely found in poets of other languages. But his poetry has lost its natural charm and has become obscure because of the use of several difficult poetic techniques. The patterns of sounds and rhythms in his poetry take precedence over the rules of grammar.

Another defect in Bhanja's poetry is the excessive emphasis on the poetic sentiment of love and on the description of physical love. So the charges of vulgarity and obscenity are rightly levelled against his poetry. In matters of physical love and sexuality Bhanja has given a free play to his imagination, so his poetry violates all the rules of moral conduct by exciting sexual instinct of the readers.

Again Bhanja's poetry is characterised by ambiguity and obscurity of expression. One has to expend a lot of time, and energy on his poetry in order to understand and appreciate it. But one cannot reap the benefit according to his labour.

In spite of such defects, Bhanja's poetry has some educational value. Here and there we come across beautiful expressions.

His command over Odia language, idiom, diction, metre and rhythm is unparalled. But his difficult style of writing has made his poems obscure. Thus, in this essay we see Biswanath's objective attitude, authentic arguments and impartial judgement in his criticism of Upendra Bhanja as a poet.

The importance of education in life and the utility of the study of history have been described in essays such as 'Siksha' (Education) 'Balyasiksha' (Childhood Education) and 'Itihasa' (History). In 'Siksha' he says education is necessary for the holistic development of man. A school or an academic institution is not the only place where human beings are educated. The entire world is an educational institution for them. It provides lively education. The purpose of education is not to show one's learning or to make it a means for earning one's livelihood. Real education develops the potentialities of men and women. Education is not meant for bringing material prosperity. It should bring noble thoughts, refined taste and spiritual prosperity. It develops independent thinking in man and makes him quest for knowledge. With true education, man learns how to move about in the world of thought, imagination and hope, to live in harmony with nature and acquire moral wisdom and faith in God.

In 'Balayasiksha' the essayist says during childhood days, the desire to know and satisfy one's curiosity is very strong. Children ask thousands of questions. We should deal with them with patience and answer their questions. We should not teach them certain things which may harm them. The parents should be careful about what their children learn and how their learning forms their character.

Some children learn about immoral things and develop bad habits from childhood. Some children learn to tell lies and become hypocrites from their family – environment. In some educated families children also learn to drink. Some children also learn foul language from their families and environment. The essayist has advised parents and society to take adequate care about the education of children from childhood. If such care is taken, the honour of the nation and its language will remain intact. According

to the essayist both the family and the social environment should be ideal places for the education of children.

In the essay 'Itihasa' Biswanath says whatever we see at present are products of history. All the affairs of human society are parts of history. In order to understand human society one is required to study its history. If history does not give accounts of the gradual development of man it is not genuine history rather it is 'a shallow village tale'. Nowadays history that is being written conforms to the ideal of writing history. No more, history is being written about kings and the politics of their time. Now it is a union of manners, conduct, morals, education, industry, trade and commerce, literature, art and architecture, paintings and science, etc. of a particular period. Therefore, some thoughtful scholars have tried to record the complete accounts of different periods and published the same as the history of literature, history of religion, history of philosophy and history of science, etc. For real inquisitive people literature, industry, trade, religion, morality, science and philosophy, etc. are full of historical truths. The life, food and clothing of every individual appear like history before him.

We have heard that example is better than precept. History provides us with many examples from which we learn different things. The fall of an individual or a nation takes place due to some reasons. A man might have fallen due to his egotism. We learn from this instance that we should not be egotistic rather be humble. Similarly a nation might have fallen due to its unrighteousness. From this historical fact we come to know about the value of righteousness. So by reading history we become enlightened and all our disbeliefs disappear. Witnessing the defeat of untruth and sin and victory of truth and righteousness from history we are thrilled with hope and belief. In fact, history is a unique teacher who has no equal.

With hard penance and a lot of effort our ancestors have discovered and invented many things which add to our comfort. To know about them and their discoveries and inventions give us comfort and happiness. The child of the past is the father of the future. Our forefathers have done something for us. We should

take the cue from them and do something for future generations. Doing something for the future taking the cue from history will give us happiness.

History teaches us an important lesson. The lesson is that truth and excellence are immortal and they never die. Because of these two things human society is constantly moving on the path of progress and prosperity. This progress must be moral. According to the essayist, 'the evolution of a highly destined society must be moral; it must run in the grooves of the celestial wheels'. An immoral and mean nation cannot become a highly civilized nation. The history of each nation bears testimony to this fact.

Biswanath considered it his moral duly to write about the lives of eminent persons who had worked selflessly for the nation as well as his state. The lives of great men hold ideals for the people of later generations. Biswanath was influenced by Henry Wordsworth Longfellow who had said.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime.
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time

So he wrote essays like 'Kavibara Radhanath Ray', 'Madhusudan Rao', 'Mahatma Keshabchandra Sen', 'Raghubanshara Dileep', and 'Mibarara Shesha Swadhinaraja Virabara Amar Singh,' etc. Thus, he wrote about poets, social reformers and heroic, historical characters. Biswanath has paid his highest regard to Keshabchandra Sen. He has followed the principles and ideals of the latter. Hence he has addressed him as 'Mahatma' (The Great Soul). In his essay entitled 'Mahatma Keshabchandra Sen', he has discussed his virtues and important qualities. He calls Keshbachandra's *Jeevanaveda* as a great work of art.

According to Biswanath great men are sent by God to do a special work which is ordained by Him Keshabchandra was one among them. A great man appears on the earth at a particular time and situation when there is excess of corruption, misbahaviour and indiscipline in the world and untruth as well as

injustice instead of truth and justice rule over the world. At a time when Indians had become very much indisciplined and turned materialists under the influence of Western education Keshabchandra appeared on the scene to unite Western knowledge with eastern spirituality, to show how a householder can have faith in Brahma and for combining the ideas of Hinduism with those of Christianity.

He did austere penance from his childhood days. It was the beginning of the Veda of life. It was prayer and with prayer he could solve all the problems of life. He listened to his inner voice although he had knowledge of different scriptures and had come across sages and greatmen of all countries and communities.

The second feature of a greatman's life is that he accepts all the saintly qualities of all but in his own way without surrendering his individuality. A man cannot be great without this independence of mind.

The third feature of a greatman's life is that they see divine light where ordinary people see darkness. Hope and faith constitute the essence of their life. Keshabchandra had felt that, soon, there would be a grand union of different communities and all people would embrace one universal religion and he had stated it clearly. Being inspired by this idea he had made efforts for the unity of all religions. It is said:

The heights by greatmen reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight
But they while their companions slept
Were toiling upward in the night

From the time when he was just fourteen years old he had made austere penance and later achieved great success. Consequently he wrote two great works namely *Navabidhana Ghoshana* and *Naba Samhita*. These were books which preached high ideals for household people who had deep faith in Brahma.

Keshabchandra was an enthusiastic social reformer. But his chief aim was to preach and propagate a pure universal religion named Brahmadharma. He had fought against ignorance, discrimination of men and women, the lowly status given to

women, casteism, child-marriage, drinking and corruption that permeated human society.

Keshabachandra was independent-minded and encouraged independent thinking in others. He had advised to follow the path of truth, to repudiate gurus, scriptures and all intermediaries between man and God and to make dharma the greatest support of one's life. In his opinion all the affairs of life must conform to Dharma. One need not lead the life of a recluse in the forest. He should be a householder but his family should be a step to ascend to Heaven. Biswanath has ended the essays with a quotation from Keshabchandra where he exhorts people to regard greatmen as God's manifestations:

> We cannot dishonour or trifle with them (great men). We cannot dispose of them as mere great heroic characters enjoying empty praise and admiration. We must regard them as God's manifestations to each one of us, and so open the whole heart to them so that it may be filled with all that is noble and divine, in them. We should so love and render respect to them that under their influence and with their aid we may find Him whom they reveal (*Utkal Sahitya*. 1st issue, No.2).

Biswanath had also written some other biographical essays like 'Dayaveer Iswarachandra Vidyasagar', 'Adbhuta Atmotsrga', 'Paralokagata Sadhucharana', 'Paralakhemundira Dwiteeya Rajakumar Shri Padmanan Dev', and 'Purusha Simha Gandhi', etc. In the last essay he has written about some of the ideals of Gandhi. In the essay Biswanath has portrayed Mahatma Gandhi as a lion among people. His life was based on extreme sacrifice and he had kept himself at a safe distance from all luxury. He brooked all kinds of humiliations and oppression for saving the people of his country from exploitation and oppression and for establising truth and justice. The heroism and courage he has exhibited to protect the self-respect and dignity of common people, starting from those of South Africa to those of India, are unparalleled. While paying respectful homage to Gandhi

Biswanath has wished our countrymen to be inspired by his ideals and to emulate his example.

Biswanath had a great love for and pride in his country, India and state, Odisha. He knew that the role of national heroes and eminent men of the country is great for the collective development of the nation and the country. So he had written biographical essays in memory of great men such as Radhanath, Madhusudan Rao, Jagmohan Ray, Padmanav Naranyan Dev, Ranapratap, Amar Singh, and above all, Mahatma Gandhi. After the death of Radhanath, Madhusudan, Ishwarchandra and Sadhucharan he wrote essays to pay obeisance to them.

Biswanath was also interested in literary criticism. He has explained 'poetic-genius' in his essay 'Sahitya Charcha', (Literary Discourse). Explaining the phrase he has said the poet's genius is like the philosopher's stone. With it he can convert brass into gold which means ordinary things can be transformed into beautiful poetic creation. Poets are born in this world to see beauty and to show it to the world. Things that appear ugly to the ordinary people appear extremely beautiful to the eyes of a poet. It is due to the organic sensibility a poet very much possesses. According to Wordsworth, the poet is 'endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness... has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind. Moreover, he can see 'into the life of things'. He delves deep into the heart of a person and can reveal his innermost thoughts. He is a seer who can speak about the past and the future. Biswanath has mentioned in this essay that Carlyle had compared poets with prophets.

Biswanath has divided poets into three categories. The poets about whom we have discussed belong to the first category. They are poets of the first order whom we can call great poets. The number of such poets is very few. The second category of poets writes good poetry. They have adequate inventive power. But there is a difference between the poets of first order and those of the second order. In case of the first category of poets, there is harmony between their lives and their poems. They write poetry for the development of beauty but life and truth are the main-stay

of their poetry. Their poetry enchants the readers but it has also strong appeal for the human heart.

The poets of the second category are interested only in creating beautiful artifacts. For the sake of beauty they don't hesitate to use all kinds of rubbish. The poet of the third kind writes poetry combining their imagination with their learning. Among the three categories of poets they are least original. They imitate other poets. In every country their number surpasses the number of the other two categories.

Many people write poems and want to become poets. But they do not succeed. Without poetic inspiration one can never become a poet by using beautiful language and rhyming lines. A poet is a seer but they are not seers.

Talent is necessary for attempting to write any other form of literature besides poetry. Moreover, one has to practise and work hard. In the absence of talent, proper ideas and practice, writing will become inconsistent. Moreover, one should not misuse ideas as well as language.

Biswanath has raised the question of usefulness of literature in this essay. The purpose of literature is not simply to give instant delight. It has another very useful purpose and that is to give education. It should be related to life. He describes Bhanja literature as perverse because it does not instruct the readers about the higher goals of life.

The first service we can render to literature is by reading books. By reading books Biswanath means reading literary books of higher order. Such reading will be thought-provoking. Reading worthy books is like being in the company if the holy. By quoting Emerson Biswanath has said in his essay that 'we must cheer us with books of rich and believing men, who had atmosphere and amplitude about them. According to him, "every good fable, every mythology, every biography from a religious age, every passage of love, and even of philosophy and science, when they proceed from an intellectual integrity' are worth reading."

The second service for literature is criticism. Obscure ideas are made intelligible with the help of criticism. Occasionally it

helps in new thinking. It arouses our thoughts, feelings and imagination.

Then he speaks about the importance of thought and ideas in literature. The value of literature is assessed by the depth of its thought. By creative thinking a particular idea becomes the poet's own and he then expresses it beautifully. The language of the heart has tremendous appeal for the readers.

In the essay 'Sahitya O Samalochana' (Literature and Criticism) he says that literary criticism is an important and inevitable part of civilization. So a writer should not be disheartened by adverse criticism of his works. Writers of high order want and appreciate objective criticism of their works and such tendency is praiseworthy. Literary criticism is useful both for writers and readers. Criticism shows whether a work of art will permanently exist in society or not. It assesses the value of literature for the general readers.

When the writer is one, his readers are many. These readers do not have vision and taste that would equal the writer's. So a discerning critic assesses the value of the work for the readers.

Again, an important function of criticism is to remind the writer about his sense of duty. A writer should neither be afraid of or angry with the criticism of his works. If he feels that it is unjust criticism of his work, he has the right to protest against it. The critic should be impartial and write objective criticism and the writer should patiently accept the faults of his works highlighted in the criticism of his works. Otherwise, literature will lose its value and will become grotesque.

Biswanath's goal was the enrichment of Odia literature. Although he criticized harshly the immorality found in the poetry of *Ritiyuga* in Odia literature, he liked and respected the positive aspects of that literature. He appreciated the practice and perseverance that had gone into the making of that literature. Although it was not agreeable to the refined taste of people, the wealth of Odia language and its use in poetry was remarkable. The poetry of *Ritiyuga* was devoid of noble ideas and suggestive language. It put much emphasis on the physical beauty of women and on the sentiment of love. Still the aesthetic sense, melodious

sound and ornate expressions of these poems have enriched Odia literature. Biswanath had advised us to consider the spirit of the times while making an evaluation of that literature.

From the qualitative point of view Biswanath's essays were of high order. These essays are characterized by wisdom, propriety and brevity. They reflect the essayist's original thinking, extensive study, and depth of feeling and logical approach. Factual authenticity is another important feature of his essays. His thoughts are deep and ideas are harmonious. The language of the essays is simple and intelligible. The presentation of ideas is ratiocinative and beautiful at the same time.

Biswanth's essays are not completely objective, to some extent they are subjective as well. No doubt, he has chosen common topics and activities of daily life as subject matter of his essays, but the manner of presentation is sometimes subjective and the ideas have been rendered imaginatively. His essays do not surprise the reader only with rare thoughtfulness and sharpness of intelligence. They have a strong appeal not for the head but for the heart. In most of his essays Biswanath has raised and answered serious questions, discussed clearly the problems of life and found solutions for the same. While doing so, he establishes a rapport with the readers and behaves like a friend and makes his subjects intensely emotional. For example, in the essay, 'Swadhinata' (Independence) he addresses human beings desirous of independence and tells them first, to pay attention to their lives and families, to think over the real value of life. He further tells them to protect their own honour, teach their relations to do so and pay due respect to the independent opinion of others. In that case they will get heavenly independence at their own place. All other talk of independence is futile ostentation and meaningless, incoherent talk. Such essays remove our ignorance, make us wise and at the same time appeal to our heart like personal essays. One finds such kind of personal touch in English essays of Charles Lamb and G.K. Chesterton, but it is extremely, rare in Odia literature. Thus, Biswanth in some of his essays has united the two types of essay writing namely, subjective and objective.

Biswanath's essays are not very long. He has never tried to impose his views on the readers which might affect their freedom of taste and choice. To convince his readers he uses authoritative statements, popular legends anecdotes and strong arguments. In 'Swadhina Chinta' (Independent Thinking) he advises people to think freely before accepting anything as true. He does it, for example, by citing a popular legend of Rajasthan about the death of poor Hussain. Hearing this sad news the king's servant, his employees, and minister cried. But ultimately it comes to light that poor Hussain was the donkey of a washerman and it had died the previous night. Through this legend the essayist has tried to convince his readers not to be credulous, not to be slaves of habits and should have recourse to independent thinking to arrive at truth. Biswanath's advice and instruction in his essays do not offend the readers. Rather, those establish a kind of intimacy between the essayist and his readers.

As has already been said, the language of Biswanath's essays is simple and intelligible. It is solid, restrained and harmonious. It is not pompous. His prose is sometimes descriptive where he uses metaphorical and exclamatory language and rhetorical questions. In the essay 'Rakshaseeleela' he writes:

> This despicable young woman who is dancing here has a captivating smile on her face and a crooked amorous glance in her eyes! Outwardly she looks extremely beautiful. She is an image of sweetness but beneath her visible exterior dangerous things lie hidden. Hell lies behind her eyes, a sea of poison at her breasts and terrible hellfire at her lovely waist. Every moment, her hand is wielding an invisible knife to kill the simple and careless spectator... Who can calculate how many thousands of people both young and old have been killed by her and how many will die in future? ('Rakshaseeleela' *Nirbachita Rachanavali: Biswanath Kar*, P. 71).

Biswanath was in favour of correct use of language and abandonment of indecent language from literary writings. Along with Fakirmohan and Gopalchandra Praharaj, et al he wanted to

introduce novelty into Odia language. In his writings he laid emphasis on colloquial language, language actually spoken by people. In essays such as 'Kacherira Bhasha' and 'Bhasacharcha' he laid emphasis on purity of Odia language. He advised Odia writers to be careful about grammatical rules, choice of words and language usage. He was not against the entry of words from other languages into Odia but he wanted those to be completely incorporated in and assimilated by Odia language.

As Biswanath was in favour of decent use of language, he censured indiscriminate use of language, use of poetic language in prose, the perverse use of Bengali in Odia, the use of improper and obsolete words in Odia and ungrammatical language. Biswanath was the pioneer in the field of writing pure and correct Odia. Writing his essays in simple, pure and correct Odia he has tried to enrich Odia language.

His essays are rational and thoughtful. They show his clarity of thought and neatness in expression. He was free, frank and fearless in expressing his opinion candidly. For him real independence did not mean political independence it meant independence of the soul. In other words it is freedom of conscience. The misuse of freedom is waywardness. He felt good literature should not be imitative and shallow. It should be powerful enough to awaken and encourage others.

Candid presentation of thought, variety in subject matter, depth of feeling, wide learning, brevity, clarity in expression and correctness of language are the salient features of Biswanath's essays. In the domain of Odia literature he is known as an original essayist. We may cite here the views of Natabar Samantaray who is an eminent Odia critic and literary historian. According to Samantaray, the special features of Biswanath's essays are: fearlessness in presentation of truth, excellence in presentation of the subject, and judiciousness, propriety and brevity in expression. For him Biswanath's feeling, ideas, attitudes, language and mode of presentation are completely new and those are his own.

Utkal Sahitya

The literary magazine, *Utkala Sahitya* had come into existence in January 1897. It was published at a time when new awakening in the fields of literature, language, religion and politics was gathering momentum. At that time the magazines that were published were irregular in publication and short-lived. Again a controversy had started had started at that time about the efficacy and usefulness of ancient literature and modern literature. Papers and magazines such as Utkal Hiteishini, *Utkal Prabha* and *Samskarak* favoured modern Odia literature. The matter came to a head when the magazines *Indradhanu* and *Bijuli* supported ancient literature and modern literature respectively and wrote provocatively in support of one and against the other. Under such circumstances, the need for publication of an impartial and to-be-regularly-published magazine was felt. So due to historical and literary necessities *Utkal Sahitya* was born. Its purpose was to evaluate properly both ancient and modern literature and inspire new writers to write regularly and enrich Odia literature. Soon, this magazine became the mouthpiece for the writers of Odisha who expressed the hopes and aspirations of a resurgent state.

Utkal Sahitya formed a bridge between ancient literature and modern literature of Odisha. From the editorials of this magazine we get a clear picture of the literary scene of Odisha. These were written by Biswanath, the most efficient editor of that time. The purpose of this magazine was to create a new national literature, to retrieve the invaluable gems from ancient literature and to inspire modern writers to create a genuine, modern literature. *Utkal Sahitya* had declared through its editorials that it won't oppose progress and won't be a conservative magazine. It would oppose neither ancient literature nor modern literature.

The magazine progressed under the efficient editorship of Biswanath. He created a group of young writers who later on became famous litterateurs of Odisha. The writings of both old and young writers were published in this magazine after thorough editorial scrutiny. Writers having three distinct identities namely, writers of Radhanath era, of Satyabadi group and the Sabuja group

of poets contributed poems, essays and articles to this magazine. Eminent experienced writers of Odisha such as Radhanath, Fakirmohan, Madhusudan Rao, Gangadhar Meher, Nandakishore Bal, Ramshankar Roy, Chandrasekhar Nanda, Bankanidhi Patnaik, Dayanidhi Mishra, Gopalchandra Praharaj, Krushnaprasad Choudhury, Mrutyunjay Rath, Jalandhar Dev, Biswanath Kar, Gopinath Nanda. Shashibhusan Ray. Jagabandhu Singh, Mohinimohan Senapati, Chintamani Acharya, Chandramohan Maharana, Divyasingh Panigrahi, Bholanath Samantarya, Reba Ray, Sadhucharan Ray et al had made notable contributions to this magazine. They had contributed to this magazine because Biswanath Kar was its learned and efficient editor.

Biswanath was a nationalist, so he encouraged nationalistic writers of Odisha to publish their writings in this magazine. As a result nationalistic writings of Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Ratnakar Pati and Padmacharan Patnaik et al were published in *Utkal Sahitya*. As an editor Biswanath recognized the merits of the Sabuja group of poets. So poets belonging to this group, such as. Annadashankar Ray, Kalindicharan Panigrahi and Baikunthanath Patnaik could publish their dreamy poetry of escape in *Utkal Sahitya*. Poets and writers who did not belong to any group also contributed to this magazine. Such writers were Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Sarala Devi, Harishachandra Badal and Mayadhar Mansingha. Biswanath allowed not only essays and literary criticism but also new poems, short stories and novels to be published in his magazine.

Although Biswanath was an essayist he inspired writers to develop other literary forms. He inspired Fakirmohan to write novels and short stories and publish the same in *Utkal Sahitya*. Not only Fakirmohan but also all the writers of that time were inspired by Biswanath to write. As an editor he was both strict and liberal, strict in the sense that he wanted writers to obey rules and regulations of good literature and liberal in the sense that he welcomed all meritorious writers without any discrimination. When the young poets of the Sabuja group were rejected by others as writers, he saw the intrinsic merit of their

poems and welcomed them. As the Sabuja group was opposed to revivalism in literature the revivalists rejected it as a literary group. Biswanath was the first litterateur and editor to accept and inspire those poets of the group. So, with gratitude, Annadashankar Ray, a prominent member of this group wrote: "Although Biswanath Kar was not associated with Sabuja literature and *Jugaveena*, their mouthpiece, throughout his life, he was a friend, philosopher and guide of the Sabuja poets" Writers of this group such as Baikunthanath and Kalindicharan were regular contributors to *Utkal Sahitya*. Many established writers of that time were intolerant of the romantic excess of the Sabuja group of poets but Biswanath had a liberal attitude towards them. Had they not received the sympathy of Biswanath their literary pursuit would have come to an end.

The poet and literary historian, Mayadhar Mansinha has acknowledged Biswanath as a great editor. He wrote that the modern age in Odia literature owes a great deal to Biswanath for the zeal with which he championed new writers and their writings and tried to take them to the doors of common readers. According to Mansinha:

> As the Editor of the '*Utkala Sahitya*' he was practically the philosopher, guide and friend of three generations of writers in Orissa. Coming under the spell of Madhusudan Rao in early youth, the blue blooded Brahmin renounced the orthodox Hindu faith and became a Brahmo, braving poverty and social ostracism for his freedom of conscience. This intellectual integrity he maintained all through his life, sparing none however highly placed or however intimate. The scathing attacks in his editorial calumns were read and enjoyed with respect all over Orissa. His prose style was logical, clear, absolutely free from redundancy or any effort at mere embellishment, and had a uniform elegance all its own...
>
> A friend of Radhanath, Fakirmohan and Madhusudan, he was their publisher as well as critic; and friend to all eminent Oriya writers down to the thirties of this century. During

> all these years, about half a century, Visvanath Kar was to all intents and purposes the very heart of literary life in Orissa and so great was the respect for his standard of values that the publication of a poem or a story by a young writer in his '*Utkal Sahitya*' was taken as a triumph, a certificate of success, an honour much coveted but obtained only by the gifted (A History of Oriya Literature, pp. 200-201).

In fact, all the novels, almost all the stories, poems, and essays of Fakirmohan were first published in *Utkal Sahitya*. Research-oriented treatises and essays such as 'Sarala Mahabharat (later published under the title 'Sri Bharat Darpan') and Pandit Mrytyunjaya Rath's 'Sarala Charita' were published in *Utkal Sahitya*. Similarly, Gopalchandra Praharaj, Nandakishore Bal, Gangadhar Meher, Nilakantha Das, Godabarish Mishra et al owe a lot to Biswanath's *Utkal Sahitya* because some of their important works were published in this magazine. Thus, from 1897, the year of its first publication till Biswanath's death in 1934 *Utkal Sahitya* with its efficient editor Biswanath had played a great role in the domain of Odia literature, particularly in the development of modern Odia literature.

The contributions to *Utkal Sahitya* were of different types with regard to content and form. For the sake of convenience we can divide them in to the fallowing types:

(a) Writings on Brahmadharma (b) essays on literature, philosophy, politics, history and science, etc. (c) biographies and travelogues (d) modern short stories and novels (e) poetry (f) discussion on various issues – pieces of writing by the editor, published in each issue of the magazine under the heading *Bibidha Prasanga* (g) 'Bikshipta Chinta' (Scattered Thoughts) of Shashibhusàn Ray (h) short criticism of newly published books (i) elaborate account of the deceased writers, political leaders and of memorable incidents (j) editorials.

As Biswanath was a Brahmo, the magazine was favourably disposed towards Brahmadharma. The essays on Brahmadharma presented at different meetings and conferences used to be

published in *Utkal Sahitya*. Essays of this type included Madhusudan Rao's Adhyatmatattwa Chinta (Thoughts on Spiritual Philosophy) and 'Ananta Ashanti' (Infinite Anxiety); Krushaprasad Choudhury's 'Hindudharmara Punarutthan' (The Revival of Hinduism), Atmapariksha' (Self-examination), 'Arya Pratibha' (Talent of Aryans) and 'Kalpabata Hindu Dharma' (Hinduism: The Wish-fulfilling Tree); Biswanath Kar's 'Mahatma Keshabchandra Sen' (Keshabchandra Sen, The Great Soul', 'Jeevana Samasya' (Problems of Life) and 'Paramatmanka Prakasha' (The Manifestation of the Supreme Soul), etc.

Utkal Sahitya was extremely helpful in enriching Odia essay. Essays written on various topics were published in the magazine. The essays written about literature pertained to the past, the present and the future of Odia literature and expressed the writers' love for Odia literature and Odia language. Such essays include Biswanath Kar's 'Sahityara Unnati' (The Progress of Literature); Krushnaprasad Choudhury's 'Utkala Sahitya O Utkaliya Pathaka' (Odia Literature and Odia Readers); Madhusudan Rao's 'Odia Bhasha' (Odia Language); Abhiram Banja's Utkala Sahityara barataman O Bhabisyata' (The Present and the Future of Odia Literature); Mrutyunjaya Ratha's 'Odia Bhashara Moola' (The Root of Odia Language); Radhanath Ray's Utkala Sahityara Unnati' (The Progress of Odia Literature); Fakirmohan Senapati's 'Utkala Bhashara Bhoota O Bhabisyata' (The Past and Future of Odia Language), Gopalchandra Praharaj's 'Utkal Sahityare Adhunika Gati' (Modern Trends in Odia Literature), and Padmacharan Patnaik's 'Ambhamananka Matrubhashara Abastha' (The State of Our Mother Tongue), etc.

Some articles on literary research were also published. Gopinath Nanda's 'Rana Niyama Kabita (Poems on the Rules of Warfare), 'Trailanga Bhoja O Trailanga Sahitya' (Trailanga Bhoja and Telgu Literature) and 'Sarala Mahabharatara Samalochana' (A Critique of Sarala Mahabharat) were published in this magazine. Some of the critical essays of Shyamasundar Rajguru such as 'Sudramuni Saraladas', Dinakrushna Das', 'Balaram Das', 'Dhananjaya Bhanja', etc. and some of the essays of Mrytyunjaya

Rath relating to language, such as 'Shabdartha Charcha' (A Discourse on Words and their Meanings, 'Dhwanyatmaka Bhasha' (Suggestive Language), 'Gramya Bhasha' (Rural Language) and 'Sabda Rahasya' (The Mystery of Words), etc. were published in the magazine. Biswanath had encouraged them to write such essays and these essays were very much appreciated by the intelligentsia.

Mrytyunjaya Rath's essays such as 'Brahmajna Madhusudan' (Madhusudan who had knowledge of Brahma), 'Abhimanyu Samanta Simhara' and 'Unabinsa Shatadbira Utkal Patrika' (Odia magazines of Nineteenth Century) were published in Utkal Sahitya. Besides these, Biswanath had published essays and articles of eminent writers like (Tarinicharan Rath, Nilakantha Das, Bholanath Samantaray, Kulamani Das, Chintamani Acharya and Girijashankar Ray in his magazine. Due to his efforts different aspects of Odia literature were discussed and Odia criticism was enriched.

Apart from literary criticism Biswanath encouraged writers to write philosophical essays and published these essays in *Utkal Sahitya*. Mohinimohan Senapati's 'Janamantarabada' (Theory of Transmigration), 'Bartamana Jugara Akanaksha O Uddeshya' (The Desires and Objectives of the present Era), 'Bhagya' (Destiny), 'Atiprakruta' (The Supernatural), etc. were published in the magazine. Biswanath had appreciated and welcomed the atheistic ideals of Mohinimohan and published the same in his magazine. No other editor of any other magazine had ventured to publish those essays of Mohinimohan. The essay 'Yogashastra' was also published serially in this magazine. Apart from these writers Ratnakar Pati and Bipinbihari Ray had published philosophical essays in the magazine.

Besides literary and philosophical essays, historical essays, political and scientific essays were also published. Historical essays like Bipin Sen's 'Kujangara Itihas' (The History of Kujanga), Birupaksha Kar's 'Utkalare Boudha Yugara Itihas' (The History of the Buddhist Era in Utkal), 'Prachina Utkalare Jalayatra' (Voyeges in Ancient Utkal) and 'Gajasimha O Kesharibansha'

(Gagasimha and the Keshari Dynasty), Chintamani Acharya's 'Prachina Bharatara Aitihasika Upadana' (Historical Elements in Ancient India), Satyanarayan Rajguru's 'Utkalare Boudha Yugara Prabhava' (The Influence the Buddhist Era on Utkal), etc. were long essays that had adorned the pages of *Utkal Sahitya*. From these essays we come to know about some unknown facts of the cultural history of Odisha. Some of these essays show how historical facts about Odisha had been collected from *Puranas* and legends.

Essays dealing with political problems of the time were also published in *Utkal Sahitya*. Ṣadhucharan Ray's 'Rajashakti O Prajashakti' (The Power of the Rulers and the Power of the Ruled), Rajanarayan Das's 'Rajakara' (Taxes payed to the Government); Dhirendranath Choudhury's 'Bharatara Rajaneeti' (Politics in India) and 'Bharatara Prajaneeti' (Governance in India), etc. were such essays published in that magazine. These essays provide some information about the political situation of that time. Scientific essays such as Akhilachandra Palit's 'Astrology', Pranakrushna Parija's 'Budha' (Mercury) and 'Mangala' (Mars), Birajamohan Senapati's 'Krushitattwa' (The Idea of Agriculture), etc. had come out in this magazine.

Biswanath was very much interested in education, culture, archaeology, astrology, astronomy, and military science. So he had published essays like Kamapala Mishra's 'Shiksha O Samalochana' (Learning and Criticism), Chandramohan Maharana's 'Bhoogala Vidya' (Science of Geography), Pareshwar Mohanty's 'Daihika Shakti' (Physical Power), 'Jubakamananka Shiksha' (Education of the Youth), 'Utkala Ramani O Semananka Shiksha' (The Women of Odisha and their Education), etc. in his magazine. Biswanath had given a new shape to Odia essay by publishing hundreds of essays on various topics in his magazine.

Biswanath had evinced enough interest in publishing travelogues biographies, autobiographies and letters in his magazine. The experiences of travel of eminent men, in the country and abroad, were published serially. Some memorable travelogues which Biswanath had published in his magazine were Shashibhushan Ray's 'Chikitire Charidina' (Four Days spent at

Chikiti), Shailabala Das's 'Bilata Prabas' (My Stay in England), and Bhubananda Das's 'Bilata Patra' (A Letter from England). Pranakrushna Parija's experiences as a student of Cambridge University were also published.

The biographies and autobiographies of eminent persons of Odisha were published in his magazine. The biographies of Radhanath, Madhusudan and Samanta Chandrasekhar written by Pandit Nilakantha Das were first published by Biswanath in this magazine. The famous autobiography of Fakirmohan Senapati, entitled 'Senapatinka Atmacharita' (Senapati's Autobiography) was published serially in *Utkal Sahitya.*

Biswanath encouraged writers to write short stories and novels in Odia. It won't be an exaggeration to say that Biswanath discovered (the great Fakirmohan as a short story writer and a novelist. Biswanath published Fakirmohan's short stories and novels in *Utkal Sahitya* and *Utkal Sahitya* also became more popular by publishing these stories and novels. After his retirement, Fakirmohan was writing short stories at the behest of and due to the encouragement of Biswanath Kar. In this regard Surendra Mohanty, in his 'Fakirmohan Samiksha' (A Review of Fakirmohan's Works) has written. "The short stories of Fakirmohan were written in his last life when he was lying in sickbed. But, at that time, he was not in the right state of mind to write stories. He wrote the stories for *Utkal Sahitya* because Biswanath Kar urged him to do so." Fakirmohan's short stories beginning from 'Revati' to 'Garudi Mantra' were published in that magazine. Biswanath's contribution to Fakirmohan's reputation as a novelist is memorable. By publishing his novels in *Utkal Sahitya* he had brought those novels to limelight for the first time. The short stories and novels of some other notable writers such as Jalandhar Dev, Dayanidhi Mishra, Divyasingh Panigrahi, Bankanidhi Patnaik, Laxmikanta Mohapatra, Kamalakanta Das and Hairshchandra Badal were also published in the magazine.

Biswanath had a different attitude towards poetry. Unlike other editors he did not publish a large number of poems in his magazine. Although those were few in number, they were carefully selected. Poems such as Kamapala Mishra's 'Bane Banamali' (The Wild

Jasmine of the Wild), Radhanath Ray's 'Darabar'' (The Royal Court), Gangadhar Meher's 'Mahima' (Glory) Nandakishore Bal's 'Puspa' (The Flower), Padmacharan's 'Triveni Tate' (One the Banks of Triveni, Triveni is the confluence of three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati), 'Dhauli Pahad' (The Dhauli Hill) and 'Khoradha Prathama Darshane' (On seeing Khordha for the First Time), etc. were published in his magazine.

Biswanath had greatly encouraged young and talented poets. So he had published some poems of the Sabuja group of poets in his magazine. Such poems include Annadashankar Ray's 'Parimahala' (The Fairy's Abode) and Baikunthanath's 'Sabuja Bandhuprati' (To A Sabuja Friend). Biswanath also published poems of talented students in the magazine. Mayadhar Mansingh, who was a first year student at that time, was such a student who had poetic talent and whose poetry was published by Biswanath in his magazine. Mayadhar Mansingh considered it a great incident at the beginning of his literary life and for that he had expressed his gratitude to Biswanath.

Eminent Odia poets such as Chandramohan Moharana, Chintamani Mohanty, Brajamohan Panda, Laxmikanta Mohapatra, Gopabandhu Das, Kuntalakumari Sabat, Gadabarish Mishra, Kalindicharan Panigrahi, Harihar Mohapatra, Sarat Mukherjee, Mayadhar Mansingh, Radhamohan Godanayak, Sachidananda Routroy, et al have published their poems in Biswanath Kar's magazine *Utkal Sahitya*. By publishing their poems in this magazine he brought them to limelight and the magazine was also enriched by their contributions. The works of most of the representative modern Odia poets have been published in *Utkal Sahitya*, edited by Biswanath.

Under the heading 'Bibidha Prasanga' (Various Issues) Biswanath had written about 158 articles. Those were special articles or features written in journalistic prose. These articles were written on local, national and international issues, problems, facts incidents as well as culture, art, literature, colonial rule, new inventions, casteism, narrow sectarianism in religion, fight for justice and creation of good taste, etc. A remarkable trait of these articles was rational analysis of the issues involved. Thus these

articles were related to problems starting from local issues to international problems. Here, Biswanath was impartial in his views. Fearlessly and with logical arguments he expressed his views and educated the people. He had written on topics as various as the purity of Khadi (small, coarse cloth), protecting the ideals of literature, social reform, the rights of women, the cave paintings of Odisha, education in the harem, religious discourse, problems of life, the trodden path, intercaste marriage, ordeal by fire, election-riddle, new problems, Utkal Sahitya Samaj, delusion in polities, discipline in language and prohibition, etc. Thus, he has analaysed contemporary reality in journalistic style. His analysis of the problems and bold views reveal his strong, logical, argumentative, fearless personality.

Shashibhusan Ray's 'Bikshipta Chinta' (Scattered Thoughts) was published as a special feature of *Utkal Sahitya* for a long time. Brief writings on problems and incidents of public life were published in a column of the magazine as 'Bikshipta Chinta'. The simple language of Shashibhusan had great appeal for the readers. The titles of the brief articles were interesting. Such titles include 'Bada Lokanka Bada Akhi' (Ostentation of the Rich), 'Hakimanka Sahitya Charcha' (An Officer's Literary Discourse) 'Parabudhi Pralaya' (Taking Wrong Advice is Dangerous), 'Kahile a Ghare Rahibi Nahin' (If you object to my Actions, I'll leave this House), etc. By assigning the task of writing on such issues Biswanath wanted the readers to think over our social and cultural issues and be entertained by the manner of presentation of such issues. The scattered thoughts of Shashibhusan were published regularly in *Utkal Sahitya* for about 27 years beginning from 1918 to 1934.

Very often, critical reviews of literary texts were published under the heading 'Brief Critical Review'. The critical reviews of Sulochana Devi's *Parijata Mala*, Sadhucharan Ray's *Bhavana*, Fakirmohan's *Chhamana Athaguntha*, Gangadhar Meher's '*Tapaswini*, were published under this heading. But some mediocre books like *Chikitsha*, *Skuldrill Shiksha*, and *Sathi*, etc. were also reviewed. In his brief review of Meher's *Kichaka Badha* he has written that Gangadhar is a natural poet and a born poet. So the old mythical theme of the killing of Kichaka has been

recreated beautifully by him. His description of external nature has been brilliant, beautiful and lively. The book is full of merit and fit to occupy a great place in the history of Odia literature. About the defects of the work he has said that the book is too much ornate. Some obsolete words of the text might be unintelligible to the reader. The printing and get-up of the book is good.

Under this heading the editor, Biswanath also discussed the merits and demerits of different magazines. As he himself was an editor he was envious of other editors and was not favourably disposed towards their magazines. At times he made certain comments which lacked decorum and were harsh, negative and unpleasant.

Biswanath had written elegies on the death of eminent writers like Radhanath, Fakirmohan, Gourishankar, Gangadhar and Abhiram Bhanja and those were published in *Utkal Sahitya.* On the death of poet Gangadhar, Biswanath had written and published an obituary in which he had expressed his sincerest feelings:

> As a matter fact, Gangadhar was a great poet but he was a greater human being. Because of his ideal character, he was admired and respected like a god by the people of Sambalpur. Often, I had been a guest at his house and been a host to him in my house. So I had the privilege to know about his affection towards others, courtesy, simplicity, developed spirit, generosity and high mindedness. I'll cherish the invaluable memories of him forever in my life (*Utkal Sahitya*, 20/10).

When Biswanath wrote obituaries of writers on their death, he wrote about them combining their personalities with their achievements as writers.

In the magazine Biswanath wrote about memorable incidents, contemporary problems of Odisha, about mirth and merriment and affairs of the world. He also published lectures and speeches delivered at meetings and conferences in the form of essays. All those were published in a separate section of the magazine called 'Samayika Prasanga' (Occasional Incidents). Some writers with

pseudonyms such as 'Panchabana' 'Dhoorjati' and 'Shreesa' contributed writings to this section. 'Dhoorijati' was the pseudonym of Fakirmohan. Gopalchandra Praharaj had written belles-lettres for Biswanath's *Utkal Sahitya*.

From 1897 to 1934, Biswanath had written about 448 editorials for Utkal Sahitya. These editorials were written on various topics like the nature and function of literature, patriotic literature, the freedom and responsibility of the writer, the reader's ability to judge, literature of good taste, relationship between ancient and modern literature, demand and duty, rights of the young claims of a writer. literary business, higher education of women, women's education, the rights of women, good news, the unification of Odisha, poverty, politics and society, the ancient and the modern, flood and famine, serving the cause of Odia literature, explanation, the Odia Dictionary of Gopalchandra Praharaj, imitation and pursuance, etc.

In his editorial 'Sahitya-Byabasaya' (Literature Business) he has said that one should not do the literature business. A genuine litterateur should distance himself from such business. For the sake of money he should not violate his ideals and cater to the low taste of some people. In the opinion of the editor instead of leading a lowly litterateur's life the writer should earn money acting as a sweeper. If writers would write for money they cannot correct and develop the taste of the people.

In "Strishiksha Prasanga" he wrote about the state of women's education in Odisha. In his opinion it was more miserable than in other states. He wrote particularly about the problems of Ravenshaw Girls School. First, there was dearth of accommodation in the school hostel for girl students desirous of staying there. Second, the syllabus was not upto standard. Third, there was only one teacher to teach both English and Logic. There was no provision for teaching history and mathematics in the school. Logic, Botany and Sanskrit were compulsory for all students. Fourth, there was no provision for convenient transport for them.

In this editorial, Biswanath has urged the Government to open B.A. Classes in the school and make provision for scholarships

so that good and meritorious girl students could get higher education. Through this editorial he had requested the government to take necessary steps.

In 'Banya O Durbhiksha' (Flood and Famine) he wrote that Odisha was very much affected by floods and famine. Here he had discussed the causes and consequence of floods and famine. He had suggested that a lot of labour, efforts and money were needed to solve the problem. He had requested the government to take permanent remedial measures to check floods and famine in Odisha.

Through his editorials Biswanath had highlighted all the contemporary problems of society, of the state, of the country and the world. He had expressed his independent opinions freely and fearlessly. Even he had disapproved of Gandhiji's call for noncooperation and advised people first to understand the spirit of that noncooperation and then join the movement. Criticising the people who had joined the movement without considering the merits he had written that those people had blind faith in Gandhi but no conscience of their own.

Biswanath Kar was in favour of a new life. He has expressed his views openly and impartially. Women have been honoured in his writings and their problems have been discussed succinctly but judiciously. His writings show the purity of his life, cleanness of his heart, his ideal thoughts and love for truth. Moreover, his editorials show that he was both liberal and fearless. He had regard for senior writers and love for the young writers. It has been rightly said that his *Uktal Sahitya* was a writer's factory where writers were produced. It won't be wrong to say that the history of this magazine was the history of Odia literature of the first part of the twentieth century. Nobody can ignore the glorious contribution of *Utkal Sahitya* to Odia literature and culture.

Travelogue: Bharamana Brutanta

A travelogue is a piece of writing about travel. It becomes useful when one travels with a particular purpose and gives some facts

or a theory about travel. Learned and experienced travellers give some message in their account of travel. In the past, Buddhist travellers were travelling in India for preaching and propagating Buddhism and for acquiring knowledge. In the pages of Indian history we find travellers like Meghasthenes, Hiuentsang and Fahien have described the glorious past of India in their own languages. Travelling to different lands, litterateurs have recorded their experiences of travel. Their experiences have become rich stuff of literature and history.

Biswanath Kar's travelogue is named Bhramana Brutanta', which means an account of travel. His dutifulness as well as dedication to work has been revealed in this work. The travel was undertaken in 1895. At that time Biswanath was a young man of thirty years. He was converted to Brahmadharma much before.

The Primary aims of this travel were to tour some places and preach about Brahmadharma. Before starting his travel he had prepared a detailed plan for this travel. He had in mind some important places of Odisha where he would preach and propagate Brahmadharma. First, he wanted to travel from Cuttack to Kotari, then from Kotari to Sonepur. Thereafter he was to travel from Sonepur to Dhama and from Dhama to Sambalpur. From Sambalpur he had to travel to Bamanda and from Bamanda to Dhenkanal and finally he had to come back to Cuttack.

He started his journey during summer in the month of Jyestha (the second month of the Hindu Calender). Young Biswanath had mental strength and courage for undertaking this tour. He has begun the account of his travel with skilful manipulation of language. He writes:

> One can easily guess the pleasure one would derive by going on a long travel in forests and mountainous regions of a state of this hot country braving the scorching heat of summer. Generally the Bengalis and Odias deem it the greatest pleasure to spend their time in their houses in the company of their wives and we belong to that category of people. Hence we had to leave our houses after a lot of mental agitation, argument, hurly burly and fanfare.

On 10th May 1895 at 1 a.m. at night, Biswanath started travelling riding on a bullock cart in an unknown inaccessible path. It was the first time Biswanath was going on such a travel. His mentor Madhusudan Rao, Babu Rajmohan Basu Nandalal and a few others were in his company. Biswanath and Rajmohan were in the same bullock cart. They reached Bodi Sahi at 6 a.m. in the morning and at 11 a.m. they reached Pathpur. Fakirmohan provided them with hospitality. They were given milk, mango and sweet drinks during midday. In the afternoon they were served Puri (a small round crisp cake fried in oil or clarified butter), Curry and tea. At 6 p.m. they resumed their journey, At 10 p.m. they accepted the hospitality of Babu Balaram Das at Banki. Thus they passed through Banki on 12th, Khandapada on 13th, Daspalla on 14th reached Badamul Ghat (a mountain pass) at 8 a.m. and then reached Kuturi the same day at 11 a.m.

Biwanath has authentically described the beauties of nature, the morals and manners and condition of the inhabitants of the people he came across during this first leg of their journey. Biswanath has described how they heard the sweet chirpings of birds in dense forests on either side of their road in the morning hours. They collected eagerly various wild flowers including wild jasmine flowers. At Banki they made obeisance to goddess Charchika in Charchika temple. Standing on the temple premises they enjoyed the beautiful scenes of the place.

At Khandapada they remembered Samanta Chandrasekhar, the famous astronomer of Odisha. They were awe-struck to see the dense forests of Khandapada. They also visited the temple of Nilamadhab located on a hill on the bank of river Mahanadi. From the top of that hill the view of the river and the mountain ranges on the other side of the river were charming. The forests of Daspalla were dense and fear-provoking. They heard that tigers in those forests used to prey on human beings even during the daytime. At Badamula he was reminded of Satakoshia' described in Radhanath's *Mahajatra* which he had read. Now he had the real experience of seeing the wild beauty of 'Satakoshia' (a stretch of river Mahanadi which is fourteen miles long and very deep

and with mountains and gorges on both sides of the river) Here, he admits the fact that though he was overwhelmed by the wild beauty he could not compose poems since he did not have the eye of a poet. But still he gives a beautiful description. The river is very narrow and deep. The high mountains have formed walls on both banks of the river.

They heard a lot about tigers but strangely local people were not afraid of them. At Kotari he saw a strange scene. The hawker of the local post office was carrying mail bags and his wife was following him holding an axe in her hands. He heard a story that while carrying the mail the man came across a bear on the way. Addressing the bear the man said: "You see, I am doing a religious duty by carrying mail. Why do you come near me? Leave my path. Otherwise we'll fight and one of us will die. Hearing this, the bear left the place instantly". According to Biswanath people of those areas were very much credulous to believe such things.

On their way to Sonepur from Kuturi accommodation was not available for the travellers and there were no shops at all. From Banki to Boudh Biswanath found neither hospitals nor medicine shops. He thought the kings of princely states should have built lodging houses for the benefit of travellers and should have made provision for the treatment of the sick people.

On the way from Sonepur to Dhama, Biswanath and his fellow travellers had a mishap. It was summer and moreover they were passing through hilly terrains. One of their cart drivers who had fallen ill died. During their journey religious meetings were arranged at different places. In the evening they used to chant the name of Hari (God) and then discussed God who is formless. Biswanath and his companions made people acknowledge that worshipping the formless God is the best religion.

From 24[th] May to 29[th] May they had religious discourses and discussions on Brahmadharma at different places of Sambalpur. They also attended some meetings where discussions were held about Odia language and literature. There were also meetings to discuss Sambalpuri dialect. Biswanath found that Odia spoken by the local gentry was not much different from the Odia spoken by

people of Cuttack but Sambalpuri dialect was spoken by people of lower classes at Sambalpur.

On 30th May they left Sambalpur and reached Gaudapali of Bamanda which was a princely state at that time. Travelling through dense forests they reached Bamanda on 31st May and stayed there till 5th June. Their stay at Bamanda was comfortable. They had discussion about religion and literature with the Maharaja of Bamanda, the courtiers, eminent schalar Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna and other gentlemen of the kingdom. Biswanath has written in this travelogue that the practice of forced labour was not prevalent in that princely state. Those who worked for the king received wages for their labour.

The guests were given various gifts at the time of parting and they returned riding on elephants provided by the king of Bamanda. They came to Talcher via Pallahara, Rengali, and Bajrakot. They met Umesha Chandra Sarkar at that place. Umesh Chandra Sarkar is the first Odia novelist who had written the novel *Padmamali*.

Biswanath and his fellow travellers came to Dhenkanal on 12th June. About Dhenkanal, Biswanath has written that it was a big town having different kinds of shops. Most of the people of the town were addicted to drinking and taking opium. The town had a number of beautiful buildings and bungalows. The palace of the Gadajat king was situated on a hill and it looked beautiful from a distance. He saw a big pond called Bhagirathi Sagar at Dhenkanal, which he described as worth seeing. He met a person named Ramananda Swami who believed in Pranayam and Yoga. Ramananda Swami wore the religious robe of a sañyasin and was capable of speaking transcendental nonsense. He claimed that he could predict one's future by studying the palm of that person.

On 13th June they left Dhenkanal and came back to Cuttack via Athagarh and reached Cuttack at 9 a.m. Thus their travel took 36 days. This travelogue of Biswanath was larger in scope than other travelogues written by that time. Its mode of presentation and use of language were of high standard.

Brahmadharma – Tattwa:

Biswanath had written this book on the philosophy and essence of Brahmadharma. It was a small book consisting of one hundred and twenty six pages only and the book was first published in 1918 being printed at Utkal Sahitya Press of Cuttack. It was published by Utkal Brahmasamaj. The book was divided into eighteen chapters such as 'proposition,' 'What is Religion?' 'The Impact of Religion', 'The Ideals of Brahmadharma', 'Religion as an Organ of Society', 'The Significance of Brahmadharma', The Worship of Brahma', 'Adoption of Brahma Worship', 'The Manner of Worship', 'Prayer', 'Rituals' 'Birth Rites' 'The Rite of Giving a Name to an Infant and the Ceremony of feeding Cooked Rice to a Baby for the First Time', 'Initiation', 'Marriage' 'Funeral Rites', Offering of water, Food, etc. in the memory of the dead' and 'Conclusion'. This book establishes Brahmadharma as a pure religion inspired by truth. Biswanath had been converted into Brahmadharma and was closely associated with Oidsha Brahma Samaj. Naturally, he had felt the need for writing a book on Brahmadharma.

At the beginning of the book, *Brahmadharma-Tattwa* he has quoted a Sanskrit Sloka which serves as an epigraph to the book. The sloka describes the Brahma belief that this vast universe is the sacred abode of Brahma, a pure mind is a holy place, truth is like the eternal scriptures, faith is at the root of Dharma, love is the greatest instrument and detachment can be equated with selflessness.

In the introductory chapter titled. 'Proposition' the writer speaks about the subject matter and purpose of the book. He says:

> Brahmadharma has been preached and propagated in this country for about 90 years. Brahmasamajas have been established at different places to propagate the truth of this religion. Brahmasamaja has been established in this province and been active for the last fifty years. Both educated and uneducated people know about it. But very

> few people know about its real nature, significance and the rules associated with it. Several people have explained it in a strange manner. Again some religious minded people are curious to know about its essence. It is not easy to explain everything about the religion with a few words. Man considers religion as a complex thing. So with a few words one cannot satisfy his curiosity about religion and cannot make him understand it. No book on Brahmadharma has yet been published in Odia which can give a complete picture of and thorough knowledge about it. Of course our respected Maharshi Debendranath Thakur has written a book, titled 'Brahmadharma' and it has been translated into Odia. It is a very useful book for religious souls but common people cannot clearly understand the essence of Brahmadharma from this book. Only people possessing deep insight can be able to understand the essence of Brahmadharma from this book. Taking all these things into consideration we want to present the knowable truths of Brahmadharma in this book (pp 1-2).

From the long quotation given above it becomes clear that although Brahmadharma was being preached and propagated in Odisha from 1869, no original book about Brahmadharma was written. The first step for writing a book was taken by Biswanath only in 1918 as mentioned earlier.

This book is neither a translation nor a summary of any other book on Brahmadharma. It is an original book. This book plays a great role in highlighting the principles and practices of this Dharma. The book is titled *Brahmadharma-Tattwa*. As we analyse the chapters we come to the conclusion that primarily it is meant for the followers of Brahmadharma. So the author has begun with general discussions the nature of religion and its impact on human life. He has elaborately discussed the significance of this faith. Again, he has written about the modes of worship in Brahmadharma, on its rituals and principles. So the book does not have much importance for believers in other faiths. But the author has made clear from the beginning that the rules of

behavior, the manners and practices proposed in the book were not inviolable for the believers in Brahmadharma, it would only provide guidance to them. For him Brahmadharma is not a static religion, it is a progressive religion. The author said:

> Brahmadharma is an eternally progressive religion. It encompasses all the truths of all old religions of the world and will include all the truths that will be sent to human heart by God. Hence it is not possible for Brahmadharma to have a definite scripture. Our purpose, here, is to give some hints about the accepted pure and conscientious principles of its unchangeable primary truths only to the inquisitive persons.

Biswanath has spoken of two aspects of Brahmadharma of which one is unchangeable and the other changes with time. He has given more emphasis on the first aspect in his book.

After his death on 19th October 1934, Gopalchandra Praharaj, who was very close with him paid his honour to Biswanath by saying:

> Biswanath had dedicated his life to the service of literature, to the quest for truth, to the path of justice and to the practice of true religion (*Utkal Sahitya* 38/7, October 1934, P 278).

Till his death, Biswanath's commitment to literature, truth and religion was firm and uncompromising. Biswanath's literary endeavour was a kind of austerity which made him lead an ascetic life. The purpose of his literary endeavour was also the quest for truth. Hence, he searched for truth and righteousness in literature with the belief that this search would lead him on the path of infinite progress. Trying to explain the nature of dharma he wrote:

> Dharma is that with which the higher tendencies of the human heart develop completely, under whose influence man becomes capable of achieving divinity abandoning his beastly qualities, with whose help man gets pure pleasure and enjoys peace being saved from the heat of sins, with whose help human soul moves constantly on the path of development. This dharma is one, undivided and eternal:

> truth is its soul and the Supreme Soul who is the greatest Truth is its place of shelter. It is not a particular opinion or institution. Dharma is a thing of the soul; as hunger and thirst are natural for a body, dharma is natural for the soul. Conscience or the voice of God inherent in the human heart is its leader. (*Brahmadharma-Tattwa*, p.4)

Biswanath was attracted towards Brahmadharma in his youth listening to the voice of God inherent in his heart. He conducted his life following the ideals of Brahmadharma after coming in contact with Chaturbhuja Patnaik, Sadhucharan Ray and preceptor Madhusudan Rao. So *Brahmadharma-Tattwa* is not a summary of books already read or a tautological work. It is intimately related to Biswanath's life. So it is not a set of dry rules and regulations or principles pertaining to Brahmadharma; each sentence of the book is related to Biswanath's personality. Hence the book *Brahmadharma-Tattwa* is an essential document to know Biswanath and assess his personality.

Autobiography: *Nija Jeevana Kahanira Kiyadansha* (A Part of the Story of My Life)

An autobiography is a biography written by the author about himself or herself. It is distinguished from the memoir, in which the emphasis is not on the author's developing self but on the people and events that the author has known or witnessed, and also from the private diary or journal, which is a day-to-day record of the events in a person's life, written for personal use and pleasure, with little or no thought of publication.

In *Nija Jeevana Kahanira Kiyadansha* Biswanath has written about his developing self. As the name of the book suggests it is not a full-fledged autobiography. In the beginning Biswanath refers to a relative who had repeatedly requested him to write about his autobiography. Mr. Annadashankar Ray who had refused to join I.C.S. also had requested him to write about his personal experiences. Complying to their requests he had written about his experiences briefly. On being requested by the relative he

enlarged the brief account of his experiences, added some new incidents and wrote that autobiography. He was aware that if he included all the incidents of his life and environment the scope of his autobiography would be large. But he didn't know if he would ever get the opportunity to do so. But he thought the possibility of such a thing was very much less.

Biswanath, first, speaks about his family and dynasty. The Kar dynasty of Mulabasanta, his village was never very rich nor learned or scholarly. But the people of that dynasty commanded respect in that region. Even, in the whole district of Cuttack, they were liberal and progressive in all matters. They were the first persons to receive education. Again his family had led them in matters of education. Madhabchandra, Purushottam and Nilakantha, et al belonging to his family had gone to Sambalpur region and spread modern education. They had taken with them several young men, educated them and employed them for imparting education. Biswanath felt honoured that in every part of Sambalpur the Kar family of Mulabasanta was called and respected as 'Gurubansha' (The Family of Teachers). The members of his family had received education from the normal school for the first time. They also had English education for the first time among the Brahmins.

Biswanath was born in December 1864. Since he was the First son of the family he got a lot of love and affection from the members of his family. In early childhood he had started his education under the supervision of Govinda Abadhanan (a primary school teacher). Biswanath fondly remembers his first teacher. He was his most favourite student. He remembers how he was being carried by the teacher on his shoulders from his house to the village chatashali (a type of non-government primary school). Then he learnt Sanskrit from Brajabandhu Kar and in the Sanskrit school established by the Mishra family of nearby village Bhakuda. Biswanath has been very candid to say that he had begun his modern school education at a comparatively later age. His modern school education had started at the M.E school of Kuanpal, a nearby village.

He has described both the positive and negative sides for

village Kuanpal. This was a rich and educated village. Scholars from different places came to it and it was famous for discourses and discussions on scriptures and fine arts like music and different types of amusement and fun. On the other hand corruption was rampant due to the irresistible and excessive desire for luxury and amusements. Biswanath was very sad at heart to see the ugly pictures of corruption and bad habits existing with pompous religious ceremonies and institutions. He writes:

> I had realized in those younger days the worthlessness of ostentatious religious ceremonies and lost faith in the prevailing religion and casteism. Alas! As a result of the corruption the village was ruined in a short time (*Sahityaguru Bagmi Biswanath Kar*, p.373).

Biswanath says there was perfect harmony in their family. His uncle who was working at a distant place used to send money to his father and his father was maintaining the family with that money and the income he had from agriculture. His father believed in the dignity of labour and considered no work as high or low. Gardening was his hobby and he produced different types of vegetables in the garden. He was frugal and lived within his means. Occasionally people came to them asking for something or the other. His father also believed in cleanliness and neatness. He was a man of discipline and never tolerated indiscipline anywhere. As he was very honest and impartial he never bowed before anybody.

His father was short-tempered and flew into a rage when he saw any kind of irregularity. He did not interfere in anybody's affairs. He advised Biswanath and his brothers to do their duties without any fear or anxiety.

His mother was soft, sweet and kind-hearted. Tears rolled down her cheeks when she heard about the sorrows and sufferings of others. She was helpful towards the poor and the needy. For her extremely generous nature she was often censured and reproached by Biswanath's aunt. Consequently she would weep silently. She had a desire that when her sons would grow up and earn she would give financial help to the needy as much as she

could. Biswanath expresses regret that her wishes could not be fulfilled. Biswanath acquired some of the qualities of his parents and his personality was moulded by these qualities.

While he was still a student at Kuanpal School he married Janaki Devi of village kanchia of Darpani. At that time he was only twelve years old and his bride was a girl of eight years. Child marriage, particularly in a Brahmin family, was the order of the day in Odisha.

As his father was reciting *Puranas* in his village and other villages Biswanath developed a kind of love for *Puranas* and old mythologies. When puranas were recited in his village he listened to them attentively. In this autobiography he has said that he had good knowledge of *Puranas* from his chilldhood and this knowledge had helped him a lot in his literary life.

About religion he says he cannot say whether he was strongly attracted to dharma in his childhood days. But he knew from his childhood that the spirit of dharma had not permeated life in general and people did not have strong belief in morality. He knew that most people were immoral and they did not have true humanity. The lack of morality in public life had perturbed him and he had discovered that the religion practised by people was shallow and sham.

He admits that he was under the evil influence of some of his friends at Kuanpal. As he was soft and tender herated he was easily influenced by them. At Kuanpal and even at Pyarimohan Academy at Cuttack his mind had become narrow and low minded due to the evil influence of some bad friends and companions. He says that till the age of twenty one he did not have a deep understanding of human life.

Biswanath has described his development of love for literature. After coming to Cuttack to study in a high school he stayed in the residence of Pandit Kapileswar Vidyabhusan. Vidyabhusan was well-versed in ancient literature. Observing Biswanath's interest in literature he accepted Biswanath as his disciple. He taught Biswanath literature and discussed it with him. Many Sanskrit scholars visited his house Biswanath availed himself of this opportunity and discussed Sanskrit Kavyas with them.

At that time he did not have any higher thought or any high ideal to follow. He did not have the natural urge to search for a noble man. Out of curiosity he visited Brahma Samaj and joined their chanting the sacred name of God but he did not get anything which could touch his heart. Rather he, along with his friends criticized and mocked at the shallowness of Brahma dharma.

But he was careful enough not to show arrogance or disrespect to anybody. He was humble by nature from the beginning so in later life it was not necessary to make perseverant efforts to become humble. Because of this trait of his personality he could easily mix with young and ignorant persons and did not feel uncomfortable about it.

From the very young days he had a deeply developed sense of justice. While he was in the entrance class of Pyarimohan Academy he protested against the unjust behavior of a teacher and learning that institution he joined the newly established Mission school. In the new school he learnt certain things about Christianity and he developed a liberal attitude towards religion. At that time his attitudes and feelings about Christianity were such that some of his Christian friends expected that he would be converted to this religion.

From the student days at Kuanpal he had a liberal attitude towards casteism. Now he did not feel uncomfortable to eat and drink with friends of different castes. He had also taken food at the house of a Muslim friend. While reading at Mission school, he did not hesitate to accept the invitation of Christian friends to lunch or dinner at their houses. Beforehand he had lost faith in Hindu gods and goddesses. But he did not yet have a creative faith. Just, he had a faint idea that there is someone called God who is the Creator of this Universe.

While reading in Pyarimohan Academy he had developed love and respect for Pyarimohan's life, his honesty, good manners, sacrifice, courage and love for others. Ofcourse, Pyarimohan was dead by that time. Madhusudan Rao was the soulmate of Pyarimohan. Biswanath was somewhat attracted towards him. As Biswanath's uncle had requested him to take special care of Biswanath he gladly did it. Biswanath became enchanted by his

charismatic personality – character, greatness and sweetness. His love and respect for Madhusudan grew day by day.

He came out of the school in 1884 and began searching for a job, but he had to wait for more than a year at Cuttack. At that time Chaturbhuja Patnaik, an important member of Brahma Samaj was publishing two papers, namely *Sevaka* and *Samskaraka*. Under his supervision he acted as an editor of *Sam*skaraka. During this period he had some relation with Brahmasamaj but it was an outward relationship. In January 1887 before going to join as Headmaster of a rural school he went to the Brahma temple in the morning of Magha Festival. There, he heard the solemn and inspiring prayer of Madhusudan and experienced pleasure deep in his soul. At that time a new door opened to the world of his thoughts. Without letting anybody know about it he went to the school. The thought and feeling of that day haunted his mind. In the mean time his two younger brothers, Lokanath and Bholanath came to live in a hostel adjacent to the Brahma temple and were gradually attracted to Brahmadharma.

At Birol, his place of posting he found a friend. Very often he discussed his new thought and feeling with that friend. Both of them went to a lonely place and prayed to God every day. Prayer made certain things clear to him. He felt the desire to work according to his conviction.

At that time many people joined Cuttack Brahma Samaj but they did not spend their life following the tenets of Brahmadharma. Only Madhusudan Rao and Sadhucharan Ray were doing the same. In the mean time Biswanath became intimate with Madhusudan and was introduced to Sadhucharan with whom he interacted. He read several books on Brahmadharma and he gained clarity of thought pertaining to this religion. Especially Keshabchandra Sen's *Jeevanaveda* was of great help in determining the course of his life. It was not a book of advice, it was about the experiences of life. Its first chapter was titled as 'Prarthana' (Prayer), Biswanath treated prayer as the chief resource of life. Whenever he found leisure he resorted to prayer and made a quest for self. Solitary contemplation and anxious prayer were his chief resources in this condition. Consequently

all doubts were removed from his mind and heart. The love of truth, desire for knowledge, dedication to duty, and interest in work and inculcation noble courage came automatically to his heart. He wanted to do everything according to his conviction, to follow truth in utterances, thoughts and deeds, in spite of the sorrows and sufferings, humiliations and oppression that may come on the way. He felt an intense desire to do such things. He, no more, doubted the fact that prayer guarantees light, peace, power and courage. He experienced that prayer is of great help in removing mental illness and it acts like unfailing and effective medicine.

His first child was born in 1887 on the full moon day of the month of Chaitra. Prior to his birth whenever he visited his house he did not worship the household gods because he was against idol worship. After the birth of his child he was asked to do some ritual worship and give some ritual gift to the Brahmins. As he refused to do so everybody felt sad and gloomy. The villagers protested against the behavior of Biswanath.

At Birol also he felt the heat of opposition. Biswanath felt restless due to the disaffection and opposition of the villagers. He also received disheartening news from his native village. He found hostility and hatred all around. He felt all his strength and courage were fast disappearing. But anxious prayer to God sustained him. His friends at Cuttack urged him through letters to leave the place and come back to Cuttack. He told the secretary of the school about his proposed resignation. The secretary asked him to wait till the arrival of a new teacher. In the mean time he was asked to go to his house to see his ailing mother. Ofcourse, his mother's illness was feigned. He spent about twenty two days at home. His parents and relatives lost all hope about him. Even at Cuttack the situation was bad for him. He became the butt of hatred and ridicule. Even children humiliated Biswanath and his friends. They were subjected to all kinds of disgrace and infamy. After returning from home he threw away his sacred thread, the most prominent symbol of Brahminism.

At Cuttack there were the three brothers and another young man. All other sympathizers had left. They spent about one year

in the midst of protests from various quarters. Earnest prayer was their only recourse. As the tempo of the agitation against them became feeble they concentrated on the development of their self. In the midst of abject poverty and wants they devoted themselves to study, contemplation, noble thoughts, prayer and worship with a contented mind. Apart from worshiping God individually every day, he and some of his friends were praying to God collectively in the evening and held religious discussions. They were also discussing their own faults and shortcomings and were mending their ways. In the midst of suffering, poverty, humiliation and opposition they were deriving immense pleasure and peace from those collective activities. Those gave them an ecstatic mood in which they were prepared to make any sacrifice. The author writes:

> I felt a deep sense of detachment in my heart. All desire for worldy pleasure disappeared. Somehow I satisfied my hunger. I was careful enough not to let untruth and wrong ideas to come to my mind and not to use those in words and deeds. At this stage Keshaba Chandra's book *Jeevan Beda* was like the Hindu Veda for us. Moreover, the two books of poetry of Pandit Shivanath Shastri, namely, *Puspamala* and *Pushpanjali* opened the springs of righteous inspiration in our hearts.

In this phase of his development he had some unique feelings. The autobiographer writes that he was earning only fifteen rupees a month. As he had no other alternative, with that money the three brothers managed themselves with much difficulty. Gradually he became the Headmaster of the school. He says it is easy for an individual to lead a life of sorrow and poverty but he has to think a lot before taking anyone else's is responsibility. Still overcoming all obstacles he became determined to bring his wife with a strong desire to establish a family following the ideals of Brahmadharma. Against all odds he was successful in bringing his wife to Cuttack, but his five-year-old son was not allowed to come with him. He got permanentely separated from his kinsmen. It was a great sacrifice on the part of his wife and an adventure

on his part. Barring one or two friends nobody else had encouraged him in this matter.

Apart from his normal duties at school he had to do a lot of work for Brahmasamaj. He performed all his duties sincerely and never felt tired. Gradually he had to do several other duties and he did all the work cheerfully. During these fifteen to sixteen years of his life as a teacher he got the opportunity to read different types of books. Emerson, Parker and Carlyle were his favourite authors. While working at the school he came in contact with and later became intimate with Jaganmohan Ray.

Jaganmohan Ray was in favour of Christianity and collected some substantial and devotional books written on Christianity. As his eyesight became dim he requested Biswanath to read those books before him. Biswanath himself was much benefited by reading those books. His work for the cause of literature also started at that time. The two magazines *Sevak* abd *Samskaraka* of Brahmasamaj were published for about one and a half years and then its publication had stopped. Now Biswanath was in charge of publication of both the magazines. He had literary discussions with eminent writers such as Radhanath and Fakirmohan who became his friends and he was amply benefited by them.

Then he speaks about the magazine *Utkal Sahitya*. As there was not a single, regularly published magazine in Odisha, *Utkal Sahitya* was published with the encouragement and stimulation provided by Madhusudan. All arrangements for publication were jointly made by Madhusudan, Fakirmohan, Chandramohan, Sadhucharan, Krushnaprasad and Biswanath. Biswanath became the editor and his friend Krushnaprasad whom he treated like his own brother became the manager of the magazine. The work for the magazine started with much enthusiasm and fanfare but the excitement gradually webbed away and difficulties cropped up at the beginning of the third year of publication. The greated difficulty was the problem of printing. Almost all the enthusiats shirked responsibility getting no cooperation from any quarter and being disappointed Biswanath was ready to make his own efforts.

With determination and faith in God, he proceeded ahead. He tried hard for one year and finally became hopeful of establishing a printing press. He borrowed same money for founding the press but some of his friends became jealous of him. Without caring for their jealousy and indifference he proceeded with his work silently. The press was started on 10th January 1900.

He had resigned his job as a teacher on 1st November 1899 for giving more time to the magazine. He had his wife and five children with him. It was very difficult to manage the family without a steady source of income. But he had courage and patience to meet with any eventuality.

At that time he and his Brahmo friends made perseverant efforts to see God through worship, prayer, meditation and concentration, to listen to the voice of conscience with an attentive heart and follow it without any hesitation, to see their own faults and lapses through self-examination and self-introspection and make all possible efforts to remove those. They tried to be independent-minded in thoughts, words and deeds. They would not do anything with the advice or instigation of others without asking their conscience. They would not accept anything as truth until they were sure about it. But they had love and respect for honest devotees and they read and discussed their lives and experiences. They enriched their minds with the study of history, science and philosophy where they could see the strange, divine sport of God and expression of human thought, but without due consideration they did not accept any opinion or truth. It was difficult to reconcile critical insight with love for certain things but Biswanath had no other alternative. So he had to tread a difficult path for a long time with strong determination and he became successful in his mission.

Besides, he wanted to see the direct hand of God in the beauty of nature. Occasionally, at the dead of the night he would stare at the star-studded silent sky and this sight would lift his heart and the heart got an immortal touch. Whenever he found leisure, he went to several solitary places and nearby dense forests and spent

some time at those places. These sights made his divine experience brighter and fuller.

Biswanath has written about the positive effects of such things. He writes:

> This is how life was established on a type of firm foundation. Now my inner desire was to experience greater delight than smaller pleasures. The enthusiasm, efforts and courage that were generated in my heart out of fleeting excitement became permanent features of my life. Things that used to appear difficult now became easy. There was no need of conjecture or imagination anymore. I started a new life with the feeling that human life is an instrument in the hand of God. At that time, the entire world assumed a kind of new shape (ibid, p.385).

Man proposes but God disposes. He had planned and expected a lot about the preaching and propagation of Brahmadharma with the help of his two younger brothers, Lokanath and Bholanath. But the two brothers died and Biswanath himself became ill. He became dejected and passed through the darkest days.

He thought God brought him this miserable condition to remove completely the little bit of vanity and self-dependence he had and to make him aware of the value of prayer. His dependence on himself and others disappeared. He experienced the reality of his helpless condition and the efficacy of complete dependence on God. Gradually he got back his health, his distress and dejection disappeared. He got back his strength. During this period he received a lot of love, affection, kindness, sympathy and service and those became invaluable wealth for him which he cherished in his memory.

As he has revealed his life was full of struggle. The struggle started at the age of twenty one and continued till his death. Outwardly he was allright and people thought he had a decent living. Even his wife and children did not know about his poverty and suffering. He tolerated everything silently. Whenever he lost all hope he found that every cloud has a silver lining. His chief

resources were prayer to and self-surrender before God. He never hankered after riches and honour, let alone prayed for those things. In fact, prayer for any kind of worldly things is against the rules of Brahmasamaj. That simple prayer of Jesus Christ, 'Let Thy will be done' is the best and real prayer. He did not avail himself of many opportunities for material development willingly lest his mind should become narrow. Repeatedly he advised his children never to be narrow-minded.

Fortunately he had come in contact with many honest people and he was influenced by their honest lives. In fact, he says, the life of a really honest person is like a light post which can illuminate the dark path of human life and generate great hope.

He had received blows from several unexpected quarters in life and those had terribly hurt him but he did not hurt anybody knowingly because it was contrary to his nature. But unwillingly he hurt some people at the call of duty and truth. Some people took it for the harshness of his nature He was never prejudiced when he protested against injustice and untruth. He was utterly scrupulous in all his dealings with others. To protest against unjust attacks he had very rarely defended himself. He received a lot of praise and censure in his long life and understood the worth of these two things. Very often, he was indifferent to these things. Excessive praise had made him laugh because he thought he was not worthy of that praise. The same thing also can be said about censure. In his opinion, "Not that Praise and censure have any value in life but people commit many mistakes in their assessment of things. As I have realized it very well, I am never perturbed by praise or censure" (ibid, p.389).

People had raised questions as to whether Biswanath life was dedicated to knowledge or devotion to Brahma. But he says his heart was full of feelings and concern for others. He was deeply affected by the sufferings of others. Whenever he heard about the sufferings of others, his heart melted with pity and his eyes were filled with tears. In a way he was very sentimental. But when his religious nature came to the fore he used his strong conscience and ability to judge and controlled himself and his deeply

emotional nature. For him one's devotional nature is the sweetest thing of one's life.

Most people are extremely sentimental by nature and they are unable to overcome it. Biswanath in his later life was against this quality particularly due to the inffluence of Brahmadharma. One should have harmony and balance in life and, throughout his life, Biswanath had attempted for and also succeeded in achieving these. Too much of anything was bad for him. For this he had difference of opinion with some of his friends. He knew very well that silent worship, simple prayer, listening to sweet music, and the company of honest men, make one's life harmonious and beautiful.

About the efficacy and usefulness of Brahmadharma he has said:

> Brahmadharma has removed all types of narrowness from my life. I have never thought of truth and honesty in relation to time and place because these are universal values. Never have I cherished blind parochialism and narrow communalism. I have tried very carefully to maintain the purity of religious opinions. Now-a-days we see a wrong and perversed liberality about religion and some people take credit for this. If we say all faiths are good and we bow before them, this kind of attitude does not speak of faith in those religions but it is a type of clever mundaneness. When I see such things my mind starts revolting. Some people think the purity of faith is insignificant but I don't think like that (ibid, p.390).

Brahmadharma, for him, was situated on the firm foundation of pure knowledge and clear conscience. Its ultimate goal was love, devotion and purity and these were to be constantly inculcated. For him this Brahmadharma was the means for the allround development and welfare of the entire human race. Truth, welfare beauty and sweetness were to be well established in an individual's life, family, society and country. This is the liberal ideal we must strive for. There is no narrowness of any kind in such an ideal. Here, we don't think about a particular truth of a particular religion.

There is no limit for the development of this ideal. It encompasses universality and universal humanism. Even he worshipped the Lord for the welfare of the entire world. Therefore he recited the mantra:

Sarbe bhabantu sukhinah sarbe santu niramayah

Sarbe bhadrani pasyantu ma kashit dukhabhak bhabet, which means let all be happy, let all be healthy, let all see good things and let nobody suffer.

At the end of his autobiography, Biswanath says:

> Idealism is a very big and difficult thing. Now I realise how actual life is utterly distant from ideal life. I wanted to know, understand and achieve many things. But in real life it has not been possible. I wanted to do many more things but I could not. Fighting against unfavourable circumstances my life is coming to an end. Now at this age many failures of my life appear before my eyes and make me sad and anxious.

He did not write anything more. He had to write a lot of things but he doubted that such opportunities might not be available in his life.

This autobiography of Biswanath was not published during his life time. It was edited by Chintamani Acharya and published by New Students Stores Ltd. in 1955 and reprinted by Subrata Prakashani in 2009. Then why was this autobiography written?

People write autobiographies for different purposes. Those are: (a) They think their lives will be interesting to other people, (b) to share the lessons the have learned during their life time with the readers, (c) to share their triumphs and defeats and touching moments in their lives and derive joy out of it, (d) to feed their ego, (e) to justify the actions taken during their life time to themselves and/or those who read their autobiography at some point of time in the future, (f) to pass on their acquired knowledge or experience of their lives that would be of value to the future generation readers, (g) to make money by selling their story to become popular and to take revenge on those they feel have mistreated them.

Some other writers write autobiographies to leave their legacies behind; to be remembered and be able to say that they left their mark in the world, to share the nuggets of wisdom that they have obtained through trial and error so that younger generations do not make the same mistakes.

An autobiography may also be written when the author develops an interest in rethinking when he feels he has something to say, to pass on his experiences thinking that their lives will be interesting for other people. To cash in on one's popularity, to vindicate himself to history may be the purposes behind writing an autobiography.

Finally, autobiography may be treated as a therapy because the writer, here, comes to terms with issues in his life and to understand who he really is. In the autobiography he gives vent to his own fears, insecurity or any other feeling. Thus, he can stand out of his own self and look at things from a distance and from other perspectives. Writing an autobiography in such cases becomes a way to achieve self-realisation and to get, at least, some answers to his questions.

From the readers' point of view, it can help them in understanding the writer's psychology. They share the writer's life experiences which motivate, encourage and teach them about life, its blessings and challenges.

There was no arrogance and selfish motive behind Biswanath's autobiography. He wrote it to show the development of his personality, how his character was moulded by the ordeal of sufferings. He has tried to share the lesson he had learnt during his life time, to share his triumphs and defeats and touching moments with the readers and teach them a lesson as to how an ideal personality can be built. He has passed on his acquired knowledge and experiences of his life to posterity, which can act as a touchstone to judge the quality of their lives.

Speeches and Letters:

Some of the speeches and letters of Biswanath had literary qualities and they showed his love and concern for Odia literature and language. In the speech he had delivered at the second session of Utkal Sahitya Samaj is worth mentioning. He had delivered his speech on the topic 'Jatiya Jeevanare Sahityara Sthana' (The Place of Literature in National Life). Thus the speech was entirely related to literature.

In this speech he had told that language and literature strengthen national life. These two bind together all the people of a nation. Literature is the outward expression of the hopes and aspirations of national life. Here, he described national literature as a goddess of art who descends from heaven and by causing rains of nectar brings peace and serenity to the people of that nation.

Biswanath spoke in his speech that literature also builds national life and integrates its people to work together. It inspires the writers to create new literature and enrich the national literature. Again the amount and quality of a nation is judged by its national literature. At the same time he has said that genuine writers do not have narrowness of mind. They are universal. The importance and significance of their works do not diminish even when translated into another language by an efficient translator. Ofcourse, they write for the enrichment of their provincial or national literature but literature that expresses noble thoughts and ideas transcends time and place and by being translated, enters other nations.

Biswanath was committed to the development of Odia language and literature. He was nominated to Bihar-Odisha Council for a period of five years by the British government in India. At that time it was a practice to deliver speeches in English in the Legislative Council. Biswanath wanted to break the tradition and started to deliver his speech in Odia. The non-Odias opposed him. In reply Biswanath said:

> Odia is a recognized old language. I am an Odia, my language is Odia. No honourable member of this Council has the right to cut my Odia tongue. The misguided attempt of the members not to allow me to speak in Odia indirectly means to disregard and dishour my most adored mother Utkal and Odia language and literature. The friends who oppose me should consider it in a cool mind in order to realize it.
>
> *(Samsharaka Sahityaguru Bagmi Biswanath Kar; p.68)*

The Governor had intervened in the discussion and allowed Biswanath to speak in his mother tongue and said that there was no constitutional barrier in delivering one's speech in the mother tongue.

Biswanath with his rare oratory began to speak in Odia. His language was powerful and his oratory was moving. That day, the members of the Council came to know that Odia language has a very rich vocabulary.

In his letters written to eminent writers like Gangadhar and Fakirmohan and their replies reveal his interest in enriching Odia literature and his concern for it. Biswanath wanted that Gangadhar should constantly write to enrich Odia literature. So in his letter dated 8th March 1896 he wrote:

> Why have you stopped writing for a long period of time? On whom would *Utkal Sahitya* depend! Hope, you have got a copy of *Mahayatra* [of poet Radhanath]. I sincerely desire you would write a long Kavya and bring glory to Odia literature (Konark, 180th issue, P. 63)

This language of encouragement must have inspired Gangadhar to write long Kavyas. Gangadhar was writing poems. Biswanath thought that he had the ability to write good essays in Odia. So he had requested him to write essays and send those to *Utkal Sahitya* for publication. Gangadhar actually wrote three good essays such as 'Shikshita, Ashikshita O Sikshabhimani' (The Educated, the Uneducated and the Man proud of his Education). 'Ehaki pruthivira Shabda' (Is it the voice of the Earth?') and 'Puranakavi Fakirmohan' and sent those to *Utkal Sahitya*, which

were published in the magazine. Biswanath had published in his magazine, *Utkal Sahitya* Gangadhar's poems such as 'Ayodhya Drushya', the first part of the 6th canto of *Pranaya Vallari*, 'Mahima', 'Sukhaswapna', 'Bhakti', 'Amrutamaya', 'Utkala Bharatinka Ukti', 'Nara O mayura', 'Varsharutu Prati', 'Andhakarara Atmaprasad', 'Suryaprati Deepa', 'Vakyavira O Karmavira', 'Sangaphala', 'Tara O Surya', 'Parishrama', 'Balaram Dev', 'Madhusudan Raonka Swargarohan', 'Fakiramohananka Mrutyushajya Nikatare Utkala Matara Rodan', Malaya Abhana', 'Matrubhumi', Udbodhana', 'Arpana', 'Mahajana' etc. This shows Biswanath's concern for Odia literature and ability to recognize poetic talents like Gangadhar.

On 28th March 1911 he had written a letter to Gangadhar highlighting his concern for literature: 'Very few people know how I have been worried about literature in my life. In spite of my sincere efforts I have not yet reaped benefits according to my expectations. I am still in the dark about the future of Odia literature. God only knows what will happen in future" (*Pitru Prasanga*, p.225).

In the letters of Fakirmohan written to Biswanath we come to know about Biswanath's love and concern for Odia literature. In one of his letters he wrote:

Dear Biswanath Babu,

> You have decided to establish a printing press since you did not get the opportunity to publish *Utkal Sahitya* regularly... We see that the essays of all established writes and new writers are published in your magazine. We can venture to say that *Utkal Sahitya* is being circulated and is more appreciated than the other monthly and weekly magazines published till date ('Fakirmohan Patravali, *Eashana*, 39th Issue, December 2001, pp.14-15').

In another letter he had written:

Dear Biswanath Babu,

> You must know I become extremely glad to see the progress of *Utkal Sahitya* but the sympathy of an ordinary man like

> me is not of much benefit for the magazine. *Utkal Sahitya* has saved the honour of Odia language and the Odias. I found Bengali monthly magazines have developed by publishing short stories. Therefore I was trying to write short stories. I have another purpose behind writing short stories. I think other writers will emulate my example and write the same. My desire has been fulfilled. Two stories published in the last issue of your magazine are very much promising. No more am I worried or anxious.

In a letter written to Biswanath Fakirmohan had assured Biswanath about the promise he would keep:

Dear Biswanath Babu,

> I'll keep my promise of contributing a story each month to *Utkal Sahitya*. I have begun writing a story of which I have completed two or three pages. At present I am very ill. My mind is very much anxious. If I feel well for eight to ten hours I'll complete the story. I am writing this letter to you for earmarking eight to ten pages in your magazine for the publication of my story (ibid, p.25).

It may be worth mentioning that Biswanath had urged Fakirmohan to write short stories for his magazine knowing very well that Fakirmohan was sick. Fakirmohan was complying with his request and writing short stories.

Philosophy of Life

Philosophy of life is a set of beliefs or an attitude to life that guides somebody's behavior. The focus of one's philosophy of life is resolving the existential question about the human condition. Human condition is the characteristics, key events, and situations which compose the essentials of human existence, such as birth, growth, emotionality, aspiration, conflict and mortality. Philosophy of life is a very broad topic which has been and continues to be pondered and analysed from many perspectives, including those of religion, philosophy, history, art, literature,

anthropology, psychology, biology and morality. Moral issues are those which involve the question of belief rather than of desire and preference.

We shall discuss here Biswanath's philosophy of life i.e. his beliefs and attitudes to life which guided his behavior. While analyzing the relation between literature and life we may say that only fulfilling the necessities of life is not the goal of human beings. Necessity should be connected with beauty. Everybody knows that the union of a man with a woman is necessary for the perpetuation of the human race. Similarly, the necessity of parents is felt for protecting the life of a baby. But the pleasure inherent in such activities can be equated with beauty. The purpose of creating beautiful and multicoloured clothes is not merely covering the body for the sake of protecting it or to overcome the sense of shame, its goal is also the satisfaction of one's aesthetic sense. This aesthetic sense compelled man to leave his cave-dwelling and live in beautiful buildings. For a scientist flowers fulfil some necessities of life but everybody is echanted by its beauty and fragrance. So Biswanath wrote: "Man cannot be satisfied with mere fulfilling of necessities, everything must be done or necessities should be fulfilled in a beautiful manner" ("Literature and Life", *Selected Writings of Visvanath Kar*, p. 19).

He further says God has fulfilled the world with beauty for the gratification of man's thirst for beauty. Wherever we look we see beauty. The stars of the sky have been created to meet some need but who is not happy enjoying the beauty of the stars. The same is true in case of literature. Its basic ingredients are necessity and beauty.

In his life, Biswanath has given emphasis on righteousness, morality, idealism, finding out the social problems and on their solution. The goal of his life was to instil real humanity in man and to build a society free from corruption and based on high moral principles. According to him every human being is inclined towards idealism. At every moment, he is fallowing some ideals unconsciously. Literature also has some ideals. We find developed forms of truth, love and righteousness in perfect literature. When man experiences the dearth of life-energy in him he should read

lively literature in order to reinvigorate himself. In his essay, 'Rakshasileela' (the Charm of the Female Demon) he has given beautiful advice about righteousness and morality metaphorically to make it interesting to the readers. He says one whose soul is protected by the impenetrable armour of righteousness. no temptation in this earth can allure him. Righteousness is the greatest thing of human life. One can derive perfect pleasure from it. In order to achieve it one has to cherish faith, devotion and purity in him. If one becomes dedicated and faithful to Dharma one can realize its importance in life. The writer has expressed this view in his essay 'Bishama Sankata'.

The writer believed that those who have no love for others in their hearts, they cannot get real happiness. Some people consider worldly and sensuous pleasures as real happiness. But those do not constitute real happiness or love. Real love evokes divine feelings in human heart and leads one on the path of eternity. The dharma one earns by love is the best dharma. Where there is no love, there is no dharma. A perverted thing in the name of love exists there. Love without purity is meaningless as fire without heat or sun in the absence of light is meaningless. Virtually love and purity constantly exist together. As he says in 'Ananta Prema' (Eternal Love) real happiness lies in being absorbed in the Infinite, forgetting oneself. If one is not initiated into eternal love one cannot get peace, happiness and salvation (Ananta Prema, p.103).

About his views on literature he has said ideal literature is that which can build national life and can do well for society by removing injustice, immorality and indiscipline from it. Those who are thoughtful and those who know the true nature of things they don't allow evil powers to come near them. In this context the writer has given two examples of evil powers such as Dance of Prostitutes and Drinking. According to the author, these two evils, prostitution and drinking should be eradicated from society. In the essay 'Dharma O Ananda' (Religion and Happiness) he has criticized and censured unjust and untrue activities as well as the interest in outward practice of religious rites and ceremonies in the name of religion.

Biswanath believed in the spread of women's education, in the higher education of women and the rights of women. In his essay on 'Stree-Shiksha' (Women's Education) he has strongly argued infavour of the education of women. If women are not educated, the society cannot prosper. Again, family peace depends on the education of women. Apart from having general education women should also be trained in home science, painting and music. Education would help in building the character of women.

In his editorial 'Streesiksha prasanga', he has written that the government had not made adequate efforts for the education of women. Ofcourse, he did not lay the entire blame on the government, the lack of interest of the people is also responsible for this act of omission. Through the editorial he had urged the government to open B.A classes in the institution for the women students. Again, he also required the government to make arrangements for scholarship to be given to women students.

In the editorial 'Ramanira Adhikara' (The Rights of a Woman) he says the love and respect given to women in uncivilized races is less than it is given in civilized societies. Women in Western societies have more influence and power than in Oriental societies. He feels that unless women are given rights and their condition improves society cannot progress and due to want of good house wives and good mothers society won't be lively and high spirited. So he advised society to love and respect women, to educate them, to liberate them and to expand their field of work.

Biswanath wanted to respect the past. If we do so our culture and nation both will thrive. But we should not be too much attached to the past. If we do so we cannot do anything useful for the present. At the call of the past we should not disregard the present. The real duty of man is to build a new life upon the foundation of the past. The writer is not attached to the past and he does not encourage conservatism. In his writings he had dispassionately considered the merits and demerits of both ancient and modern literature and tried to create a new trend in literature.

Biswanath was a reformer who wanted the abolition of conservatism, superstitions and blind beliefs from society. He did not believe in casteism and idol worship nor in the rites and rituals

of Hinduism. He had thrown away his sacred thread which is a symbol of Brahminism and was converted to Brahmadharma which had encouraged him to believe in one God. He fought against casteism and untouchability and was in favour of widow marriage.

As a writer Biswanath did not want name and fame. He was very much interested in enriching Odia language and literature and to create a new generation of writers. He felt serving one's self-interest does not give one real satisfaction but serving society and the nation gives pleasure, peace and happiness. Moreover, he believed service to society, nation and mankind makes one successful in life. One should not sit idlly, he should make efforts without caring for the result.

Biswanath appreciated the knowledge and material development as well as the spiritual development of the Oriental countries. In fact, he wanted to unify the two. He had raised his voice of protest against casteism, child marriage, corruption, drinking and prostitution prevailing in society. He wanted women to shed their inferiority complex, the society to give them rights, equal with those of men. He fought against the ignorance of common men and women. Hearing the call of his inner voice he became an essayist, a critic, a writer of travelogue and autobiography, an editor and a reformer. His higher calling made him a Brahmo. With his progressive vision he became a modernist and a supporter of the rights of women. He was unique in so far as his organizational ability, editorial capability and powerful oratory are concerned. His talent, ability, dedication to work and concentration of mind were the key to his success.

Conclusion

Biswanath lived a life of seventy years and breathed his last in 1934. He left a body of literature that includes essays, criticism, editorials, a travelogue an autobiography, a book on Brahmadharma, speeches and some letters which have literary value. His most important contribution to Odia literature was the editing of *Utkal Sahitya*, a literary magazine where he published the writings of eminent writers and talented new writers who became eminent later on.

During the period of renaissance in Odia literature beginning from the last part of the nineteenth century till the end of the third decade of twentieth century Biswanath played a very important role. In the last part of the nineteenth century Odia national life was passing through a critical stage. The Naanka Durviksha (the terrible famine which occurred in the ninth regnant year of Divyasingh Dev of Puri) of 1866, the failure of the British Government in India to tackle the famine, the conspiracy hatched in 1869 to abolish Odia language and the mean efforts made by some misguided Bengalis to denigrate Odia tradition and culture had made the thinkers and well-wishers of Odisha very much apprehensive about its future. Not only the rich tradition Odia language and literature, even the very Odia identity was being questioned Biswanath along with some eminent Odia writers such as Radhanath, Fakirmohan, Gangadhar, Madhusudan Rao, and Nandakishore fought for Odia language and literature. They wanted to further enrich the rich language and literature of Odisha. While Radhanath, Gangadhar, Madhusudan Rao and Nandakishore wrote poetry laying emphasis on this genre, Fakirmohan tried to enrich Odia literature by writing novels and short stories and Biswanath by writing modern essays. Of course, all these writers were not confined to a particular form of writing and attempted writing other forms of literature. But they focused

on a particular form. As at that time Odia essay and criticism was not very rich Biswanath preferred to write essays, brief criticisms and critical writing through his editorials.

Biswanath did not come from a rich family but his family was educated and cultured and it commanded respect of the people of his village and the nearby villages. His uncle was a teacher and he also became a teacher of M.E. schools and High schools after completing his education with much difficulty. From his adolescent days he was interested in Sanskrit and Odia literature. Later he read and appreciated Bengali literature and Western literature.

His fame as a litterateur rests mostly on his essays and editing of the Odia journal *Utkal Sahitya*. His collection of essays *Bibidha Prabandha* (Various Essays), as the name indicates, was a collection of essays written on various topics that were of immense value for the people and society of his time. But they are still relevant for us in this post-modern age. His essays were not subjective but objective. Still, there was, always, a personal touch in his essays. He wrote social, political, philosophical, biographical, historical and literary essays. His essays were educative and delightful at the same time. These essays establish Biswanath as a nationalistic, patriotic and progressive writer. They show him as a reformer and a man with deep social commitment. His love for Odia language and literature is revealed in these essays. The essays are written in simple and intelligible language and they appeal both to the mind and heart of the readers.

From the qualitative point of view his essays were of high order. They express deep and noble thoughts and they are characterized by wisdom, propriety, brevity and original thinking. These essays are argumentative and persuasive. In order to make the essays interesting and comprehensive he has used authoritative statements, anecdotes, popular legends and metaphorical language. Sometimes, some parts of his essays are descriptive. He has always stuck to the principle of using correct language in his essays. By reading his essays we can conclude that Biswanath was an original modern essayist who

presented modern issues and problems in a new and interesting way that was different from those of other Odia essayists.

Biswanath was very much devoted to Odia language and Odia literature. Wholeheartedly, he wanted the development and enrichment of Odia language and literature. In fact, he dreamt of a very rich Odia literature. So with the support of Radhanath, Madhusudan Rao, Fakirmohan and Chandramohan Maharana et al Biswanath published the magazine *Utkal Sahitya* in 1897. He used to publish writings of both old and new writers and encouraged young writers to write. Through this magazine he created a new national literature, discussed the valuable works of the past and created a true, modern literature.

Biswanath proved to be the most efficient editor of his time and his magazine, *Utkal Sahitya* progressed rapidly. He created a group of modern writers who achieved eminence and became famous writers of Odisha. After thorough editorial scrutiny he published the writings and those were flawless due to his editorial corrections. The writers were happy about those corrections and they took it as a matter of pride when their writings were published in *Utkal Sahitya*.

Although he was an essayist he encouraged writers to write in other forms of literature and published their manuscripts. He had encouraged and urged Fakirmohan the noted Odia fiction writer to write novels and short stories. So in a way Biswanath was the man behind the writing of Odia fiction. In *Utkal Sahitya* he had published the imaginative and romantic poems of young writers of the Sabuja group and was the chief inspiration behind modern imaginative and romantic writers of the period. Through his learned criticism, writings on various topics and editorials he had given a new orientation to the magazine. Thus, beginning from 1897 to 1934 *Utkal Sahitya* was the mouth piece of Odia literature. The history of *Utkal Sahitya* is often equated with the history of Odia literature of that period. Some critics and scholars say that *Utkal Sahitya* was a writers' factory where writers were produced. 'Factory' and 'Production' here are metaphorical words which imply the importance of this magazine for the creation of new and modern writers in Odisha during Biswanath's time.

Biswanath was instrumental not only in bringing out the magazine *Utkal Sahitya* in 1897, he was also responsible for establishing Utkal Sahityapress in January 1900 and formed the in Utkal Sahitya Samaj in 1903 which has yet been serving the cause of Odia literature. At that time the publication of the magazine, the installation of Utkal Sahitya Press and establishment of Utkal Sahitya Samaj played great roles in creating new Odia writers and enriching Odia literature. At that time the creation of these three had brought a new hope for the development of Odia language and literature.

Biswanath was a progressive thinker and he had a philosophical bent of mind. He took a leading role in the protection and enrichment of Odia language, literary organizations, spread of modernism in literature and in bringing reformation in society both through his speeches and writings. His essays and editorials provide conclusive proof of his desire for reform.

The writer had deeply felt the importance of literature in life. In his essay 'Sahitya O Jeevana' (Literature and Life) he says the purpose of literature is not merely to give delight its primary duty is to educate by teaching moral values. By reading literature one's life becomes clean and pure. Books are storehouses of knowledge and they expand the horizon of thought and consciousness. Biswanath was influenced by the views of Emerson on books. Emerson had said:

> If our times are sterile in genius, we must cheer us with books of rich and believing men who had atmosphere and amplitude about them. Every good fable, every mythology, every biography from a religious age, every passage of love, and even philosophy and science, when they proceed from an intellectual integrity and are not detached and critical, have the imaginative element (Quoted in 'Sahitya Charcha'). .

Biswanath has written that unless we read great literature our lives cannot be noble. Everybody would admit that honesty increases in the company of honest men. Books of high order can be equated with honest men and reading those books is like

being in the company of honest men. When thoughts are not progressive and talent is dwarfed in society, reading books helps a lot by doing the greatest good to it ('Sahityacharcha').

In the last part of nineteenth century and the early part of twentieth century the dreams he had dreamt about and the efforts he had made for the enrichment of Odia literature is noteworthy. He was a pioneer of Odia renaissance and one of the harbingers of modernism into Odia literature. Again he was the best essayist and prose writer of his time. He was the best representative of Odia essay and Odia prose of his time.

He made illiterate people literate by establishing night schools for them. He encouraged them to read the *Bhagabat* and recite the poetic dramas of Vaishnab Pani, a famous writer of poetic drama during his time. He established Kar Dynasty Library to provide good books to the people of his locality. For giving scope and encouragement to the students to write and get their writings published, he made arrangements for the publication of a handwritten magazine Aloka (Light) for the M.E. School students of his locality and another magazine entitled *Kaumudi* (Moonlight) for the college students who were reading at Cuttack.

Social commitment, humanism, concern for moral values, love for Odia language and literature, reformatory zeal and an optimistic and fighting spirit are the distinctive features of Biswanath's writings. Though sometimes he wrote about social and moral degeneration, he was never pessimistic about life. Behind his optimistic view of life, lies his enlightened and progressive attitude to life. These attitudes have made him reject the nihilistic aspect of modern writings.

The travelogue he has written shows his dutifulness and dedication to work. It reveals his love of nature. The two goals of his travel, to see some places of Orissa and preach Brahmadharma have been achieved as he writes in his travelogue. His travelogue was larger in scope than the travelogues written before his work. It was also written well and it was better than other travelogues available at his time.

His autobiography, though a brief one, shows the development of his personality. One can find no arrogance or selfish motive in

this work. The focus of the work is on the building of his character by the ordeal of sufferings. Here, he has tried to share the lessions he had learnt during his life-time with his readers.

Biswanath's interest in literature did not decline in his old age. While lying in sick bed he had written a letter to Gopalchandra Praharaj to complete and publish the last parts of *Purnachandra Bhashakosha*. Till his last breath he was thinking about the future of *Utkal Sahitya* which he had founded and nourished for the development of Odia literature. In his death bed he had told his son: "It is my life-breath and I have existed for it. I cannot live without it. If it survives my death I'll think I am living without my body. That disembodied existence of mine will sure be deathless". (Quoted by Archana Nayak in Rushiprana Biswanath Kar' included in *Sahityaguru Bagmi Biswanath Kar*, pp, 200-201).

Biswanath was both a literary writer and a literary guru. His original literary talent was enriched by his study, inquisitivenss and perseverance. The image of the man one gets from his works is that of a progressive, revolutionary, optimistic, innovative and sympathetic personality hopeful about the freedom and equality of men; a society free from corruption, fear, superstitions and blindbeliefs and a world full of peace and harmony. His love for Odia language and literature is unique. He wanted the progress and enrichment of Odia literature. That is why he encouraged both experienced and budding writers to write.

No doubt, he revolted against bad customs blind beliefs, superstititions and all kinds of exploitation prevailing in society. But he was in favour of our rich tradition that lays great stress on time-honoured values such as charity, compassion, self-control, fellow-feeling, sympathy, peace and harmony. He wanted sincerely the development of society, humanity and literature.

Biswanath did not write prolifically but wrote well giving authentic facts and ideas in flawless and intelligible Odia. Most of his ideas are enlightening and illuminating at the same time. He had many critics and admirers. But the number of admirers was more than the number number of critics. He was not only a writer, he was an orator as well for which he was called *Bagmi* which means an eloquent speaker in Odia. He was leader of the people,

a nationalist and a lover of Odia language as well as Odia literature. Biswanath was an excellent teacher, an eminent essayist, competent editor, an efficient organizer and a great social reformer. In recognition of his merits the British Government wanted to honour him with the title 'Ray Bahadur' which he refused to protect his self-respect. In fact, he was the first Odia to reject this title of honour.

Biswanath struggled throughout his life for the betterment of his society and for the development of Odia language and literature. He suffered from stomach ailment and stomachache in August 1934 and a few days after breathed his last in the morning of 19th October 1934. His life and literature were inseparable from each other and both were inseparable from human society. His career is a testament to a sensitive spirit that responded to life and the world with great concern, enthusiasm and energy and created a body of valuable literature, edited a prestigious magazine with elan and carved a niche for himself in the great tradition of Indian literature.

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Biswanath Kar is a talented writer of Odia essay, criticism, travelogue and autobiography. He excelled at editing the famous Odia magazine, *Utkal Sahitya* through which he created a group of eminent writers who have enriched Odia literature. His writing career spanned a long period of fifty years beginning from 1885 to 1934. During this period he also associated himself with numerous literary ventures and organizations. He was an orator par excellence. His love for Odia language and literature, his progressive attitude and revolutionary fervour, zeal for social reform, unyielding humanism, liberal attitude to life and his introduction of modern ideals and methods into Odia literature and his loving encouragement of young writers have made him a representative writer of modern Odisha and a much loved literary guru for the modern Odia writers. His life and works show how a talented, sensitive and creative spirit could be, both directly and indirectly, the cause of some of the great works of literature in Odisha.

Bijaya Kumar Nanda, the author of this monograph is a PhD in English. He is a writer, translator and a literary critic who writes both in English and Odia. He has retired as principal from the Government College, Angul, Odisha.

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